THE Atlantic
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

AMERICA ATTACKED: THE SEQUEL

LOOKING BACK FROM 2011—
AN IMAGINED HISTORY
BY RICHARD A. CLARKE

HOW WE COULD HAVE STOPPED IT

THE PLAN WE STILL DON'T HAVE
BY JAMES FALLOWS

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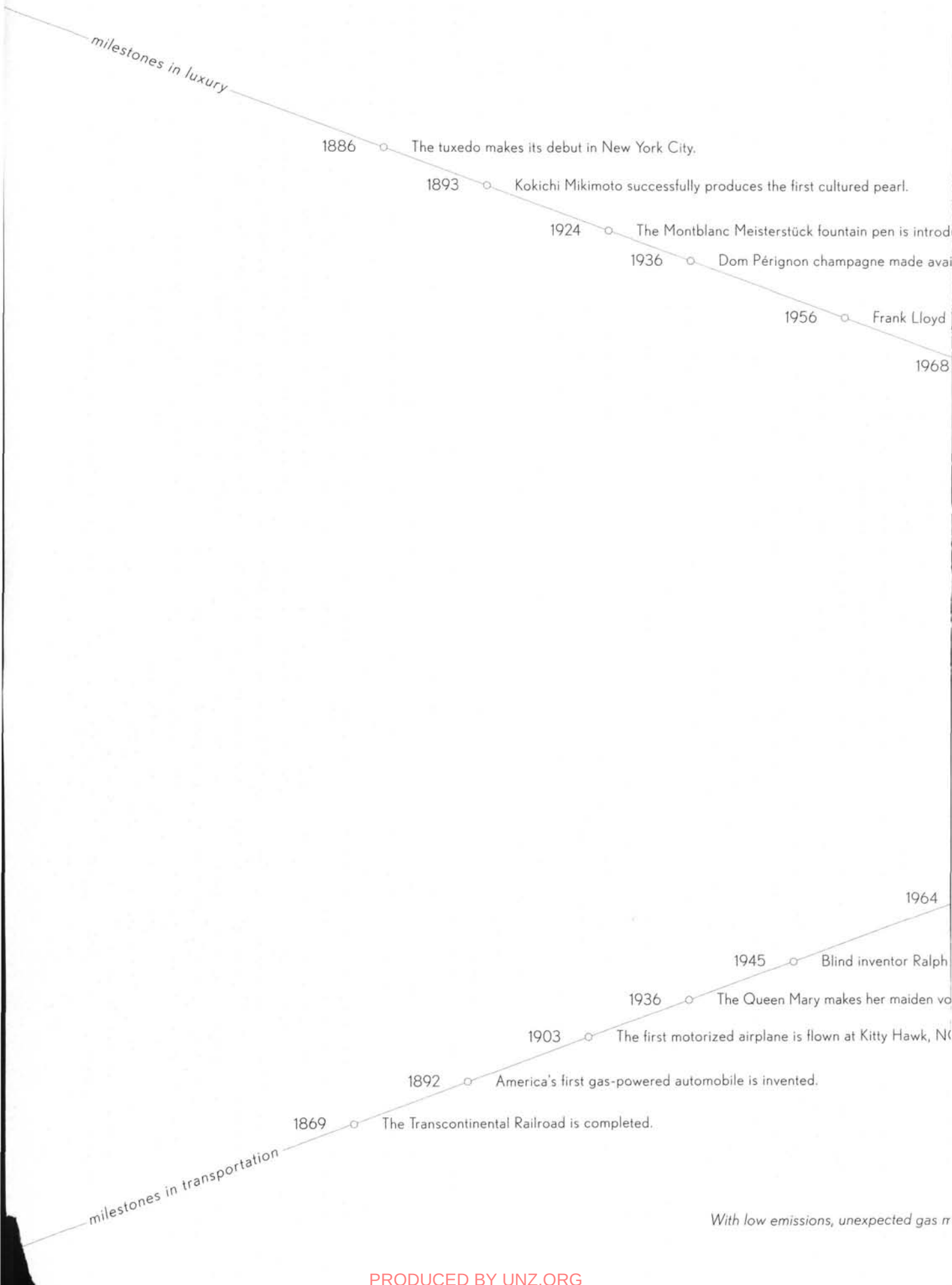

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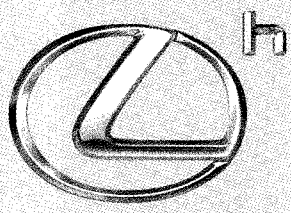
etes his design for the Guggenheim Museum.

icuzzi invents the whirlpool bath.

39 Lexus is introduced to the world.

1997 St. Regis opens its signature hotel in Aspen, CO



1997 The first mass-produced hybrid vehicle is introduced.

1994 The Chunnel links the United Kingdom and France.

The space shuttle Columbia makes its maiden flight.

kaido Shinkansen, a.k.a. Bullet Train, begins service.

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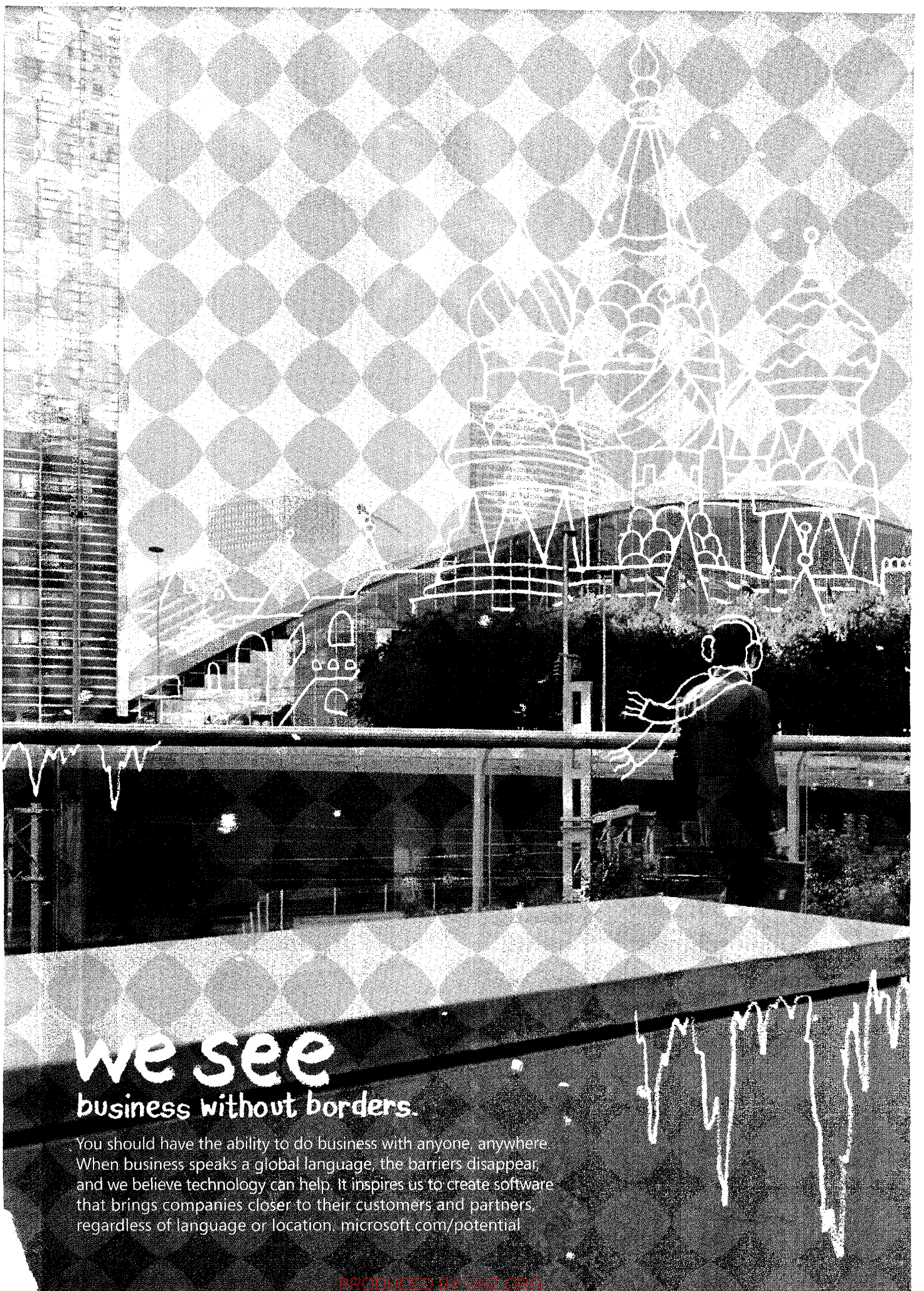

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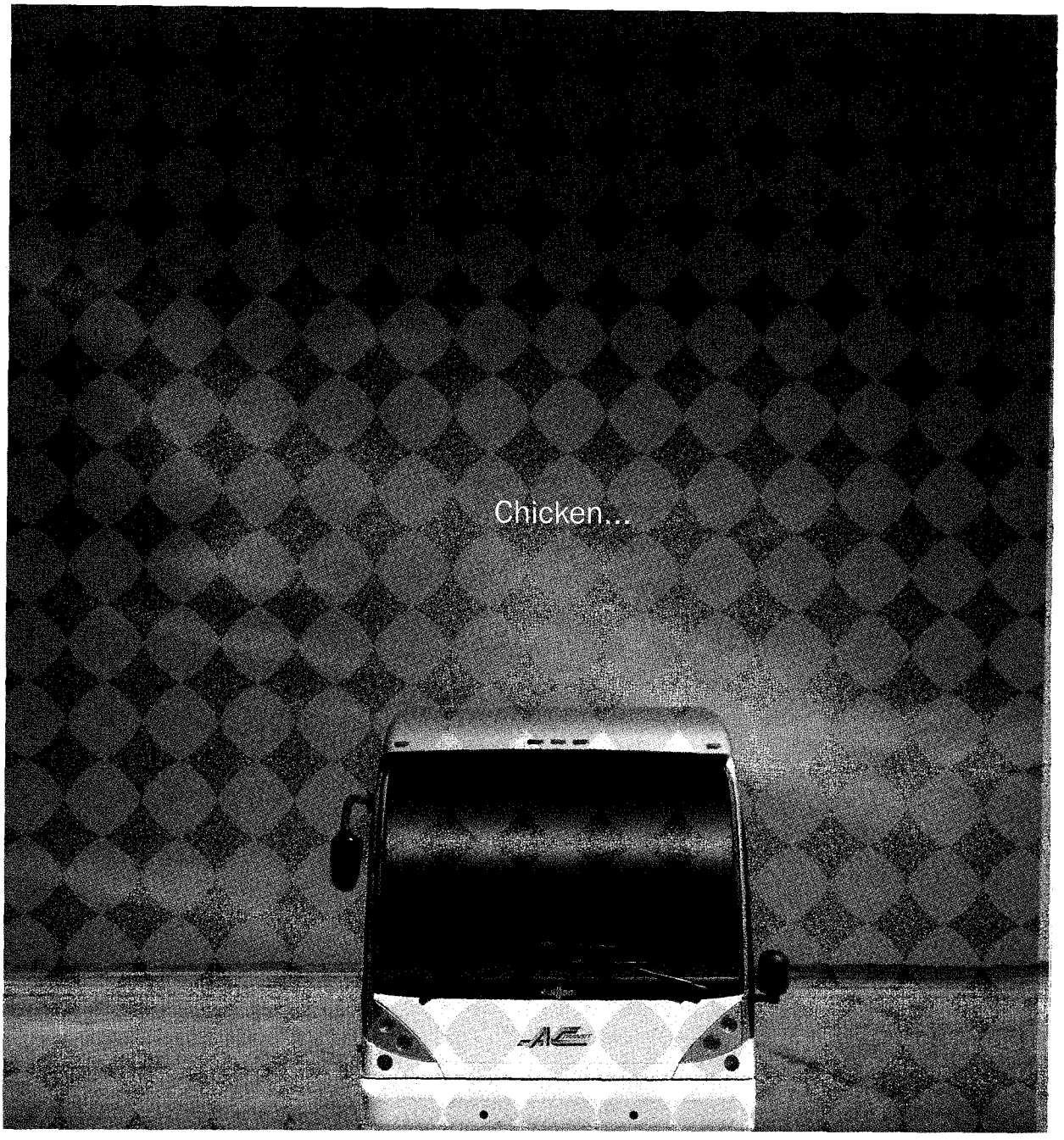

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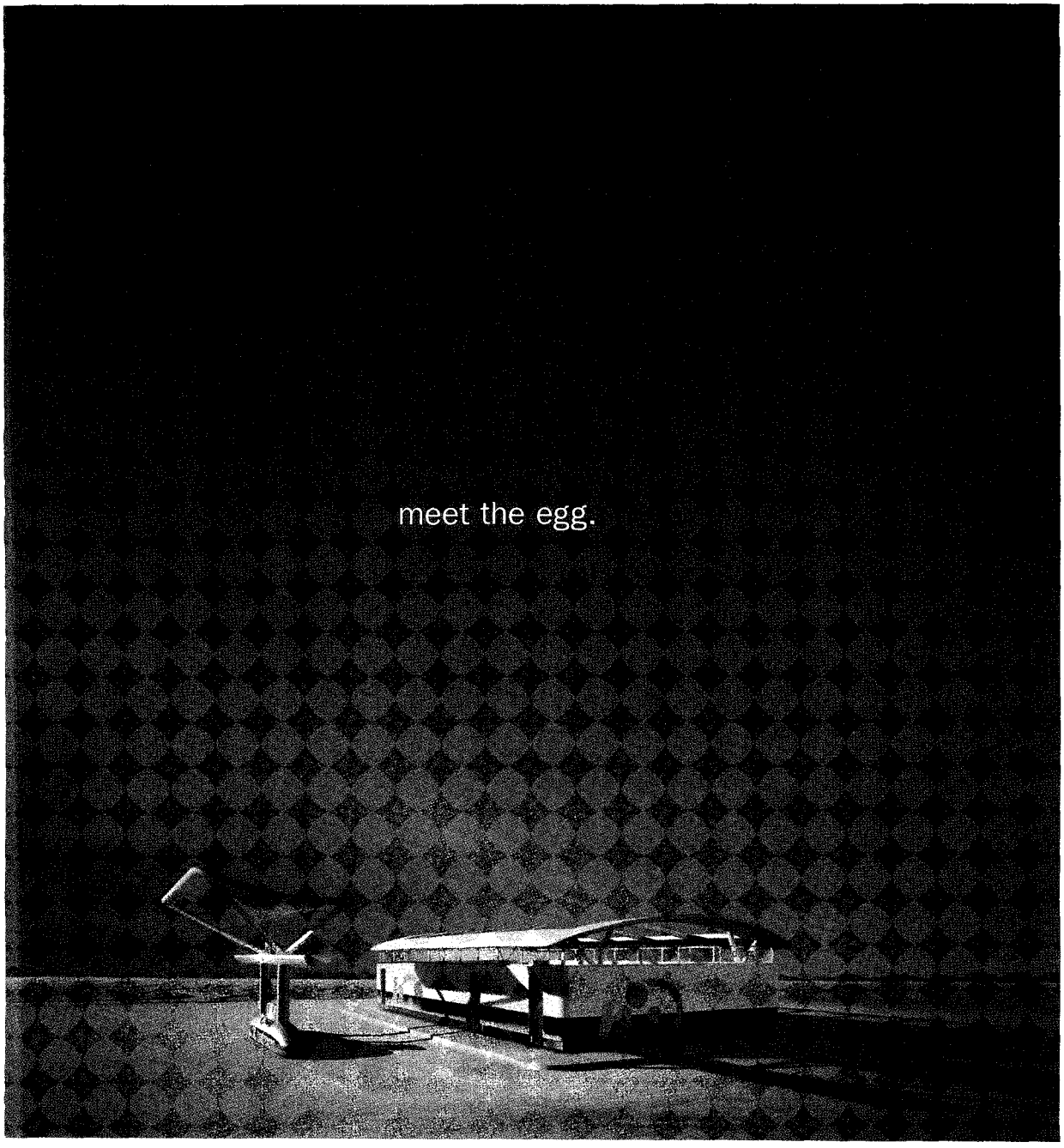

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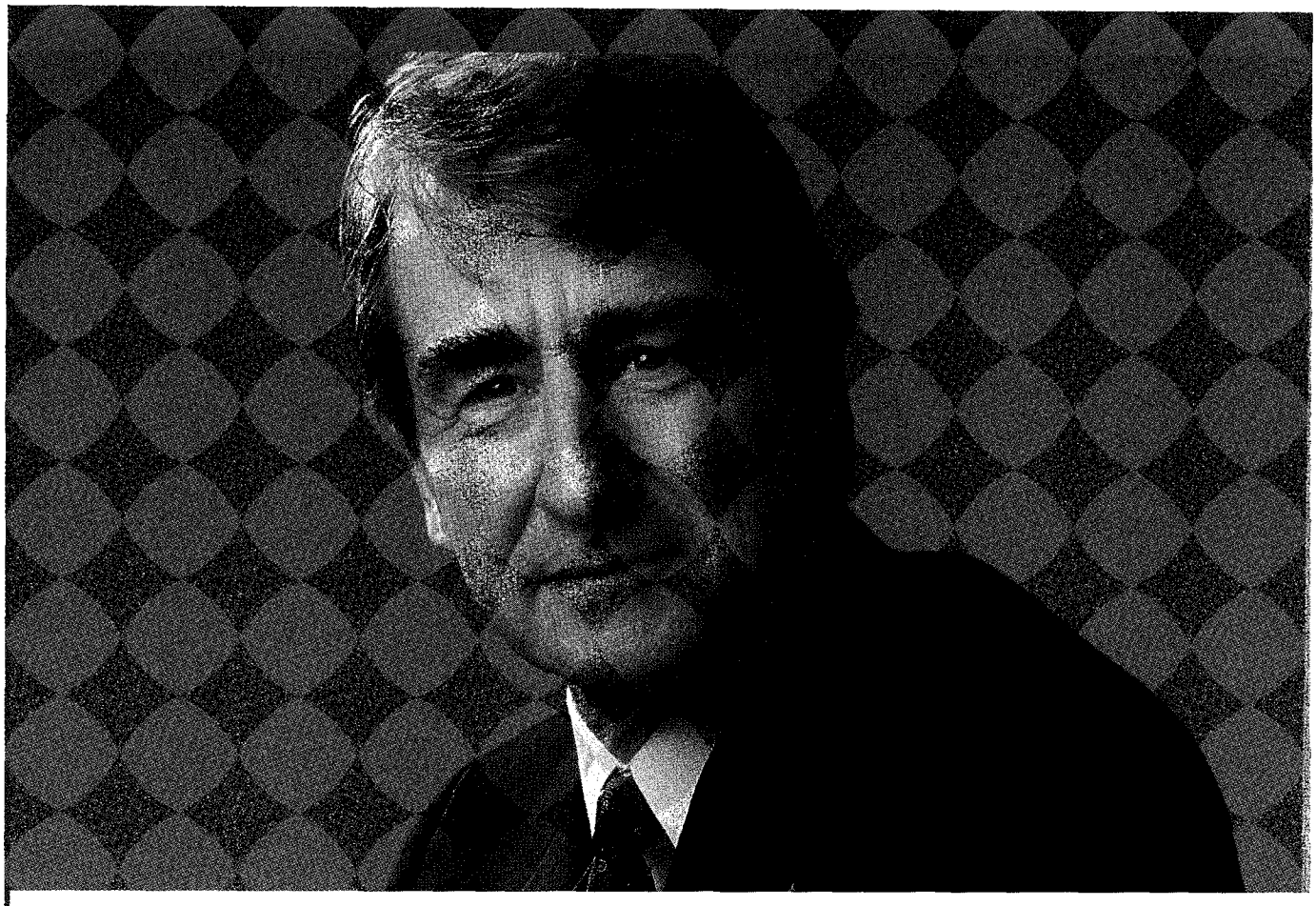

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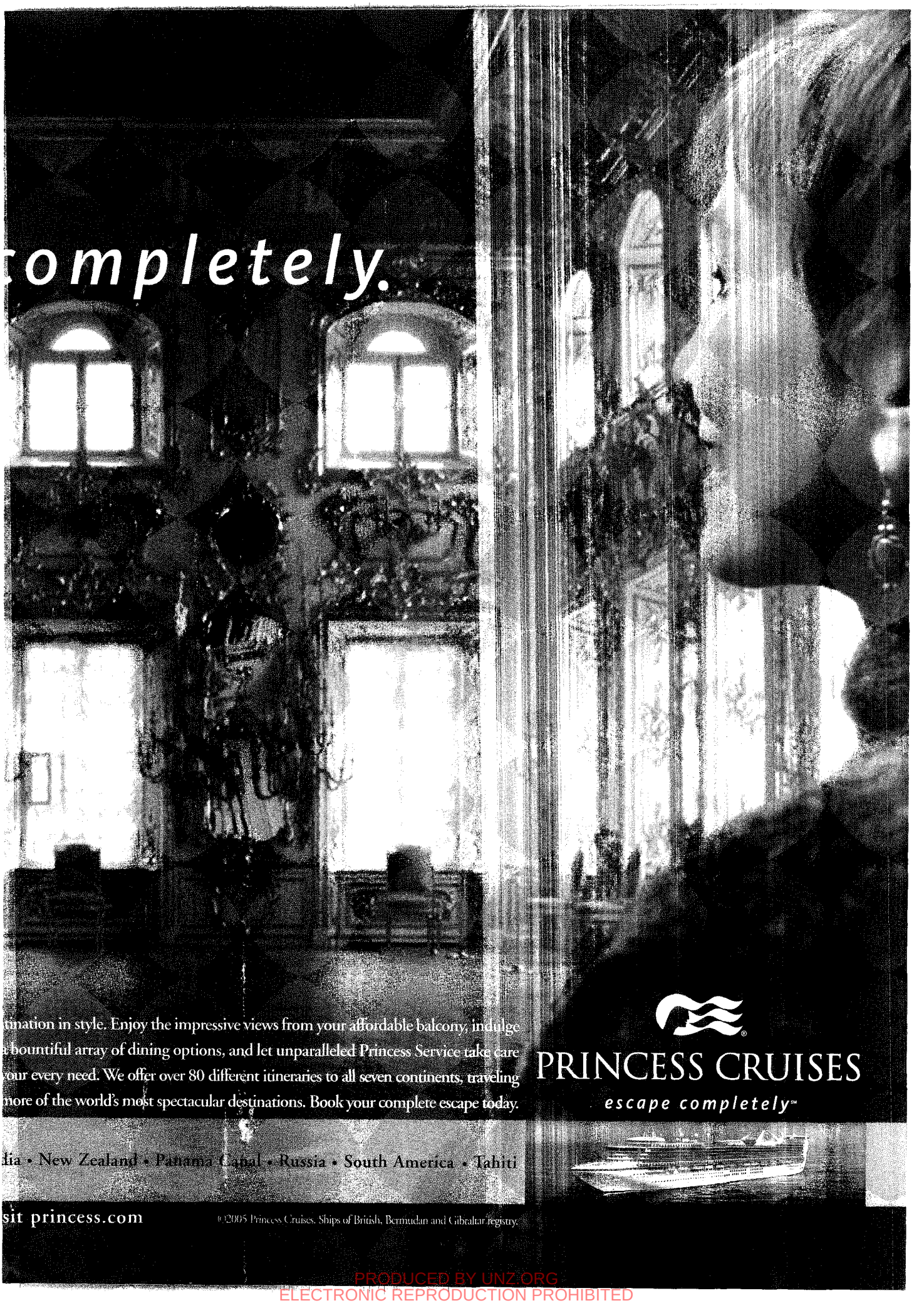

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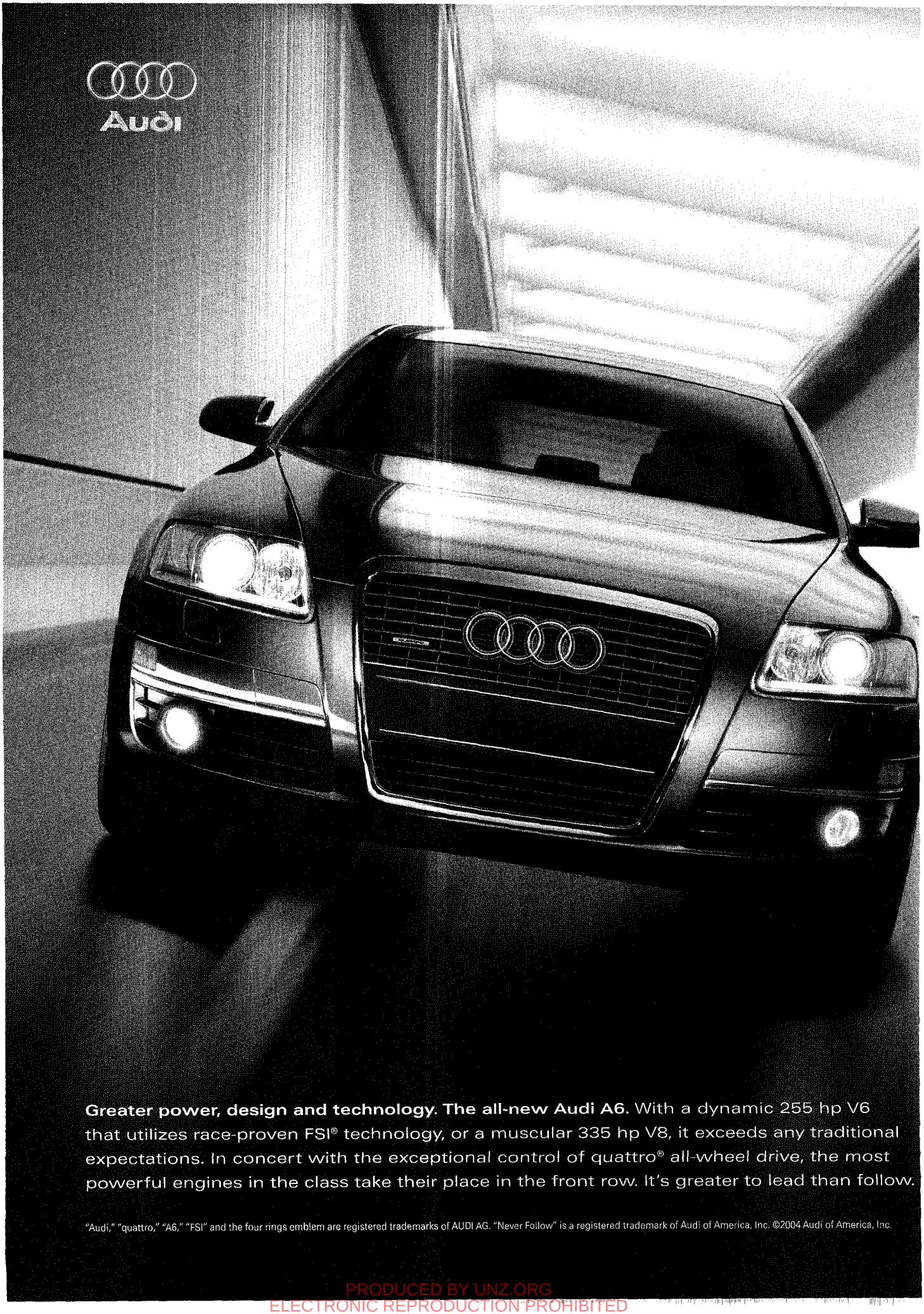

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Richard Clarke talks about "Ten Years Later," his nightmare scenario for the future of the war on terror.

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Pound's poem is read aloud by Robert Pinsky, Charles Wright, and Wen Stephenson, with an introduction by Stephenson.

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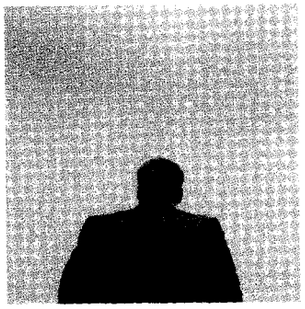

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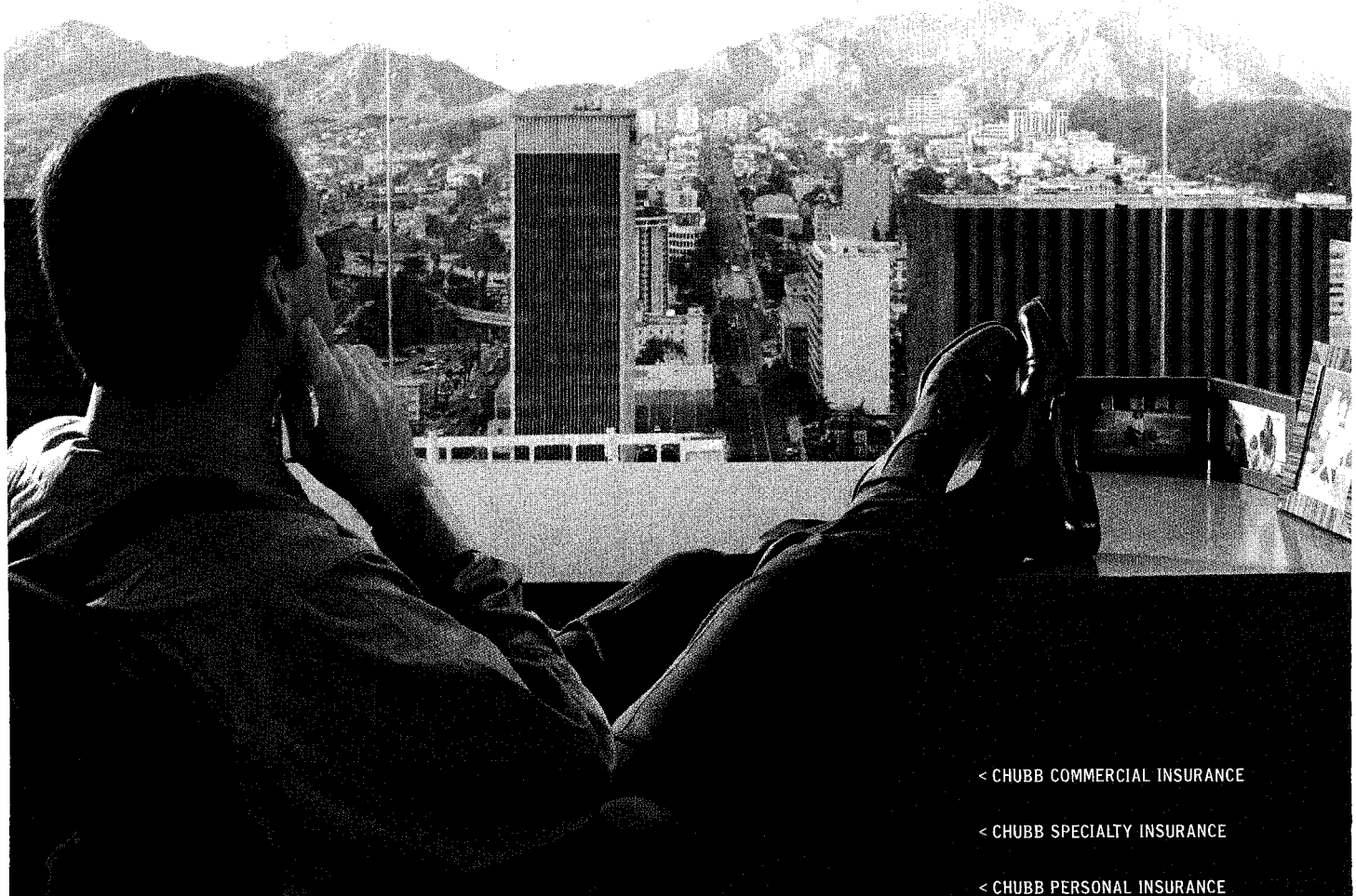

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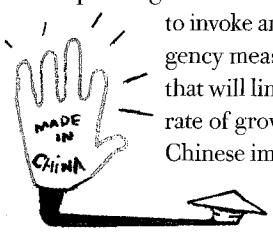
CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

JANUARY 1

Made in China

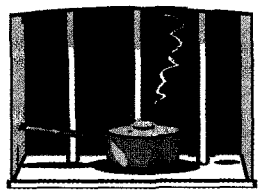
The expiration of a long-standing World Trade Organization quota system is expected to trigger a violent shakeout in the global textile market. Probable winners: China (which will jump from a 16 percent to a 50 percent share of the U.S. clothing market), India, and Pakistan. Probable losers: Cambodia, Bangladesh, and other countries whose economies rely on filling niches in the quota system. U.S. manufacturers are pressing the White House to invoke an emergency measure that will limit the rate of growth in Chinese imports.



JANUARY 6

Missing Martha

Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia launches its first TV venture without its star, whose legal woes put the company in the red for the first time in 2003. The new show, *Everyday Food*, is a spinoff of the eponymous magazine and features relatively young, unknown chefs, editors, and food testers. Like the finer rap-music moguls, Stewart—who awaits a March release from prison—will act as executive producer from her cell. A reality-TV deal with the creator of *Survivor* is also in the works.



JANUARY 10

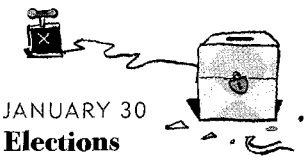
Libya Opens for Business

Last year the United States lifted its eighteen-year-old sanctions on Libya after the North African nation scrapped its nuclear program. Now U.S. oil companies can bid for oil-and-gas-exploration contracts. Libya has the world's ninth largest oil reserves. The rush of foreign investment is expected to boost production capacity by a third.

JANUARY 17

Lynndie England's Court-Martial

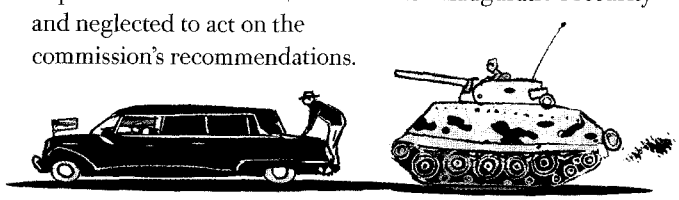
Lynndie England, the Army reservist infamous worldwide as the "Leash Girl" in the Abu Ghraib prison-abuse photos, faces court-martial in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on nineteen counts, and a possible thirty-eight years in prison. Last October, England gave birth to a boy conceived with fellow reservist Charles Graner, also scheduled for a January court-martial.



JANUARY 20

Inauguration Day

Terrorism experts fear that the inauguration is a ripe target. The latest report from the Continuity of Government Commission makes clear why: a hypothetical scenario has terrorists detonating a nuclear device on Pennsylvania Avenue just before the inauguration, destroying everything and everyone within a one-mile radius, including the president and vice-president, the Supreme Court, and most of Congress. Undaunted by the prospect of its own demise, the House of Representatives blocked $10 million for inauguration security and neglected to act on the commission's recommendations.



JANUARY 30

Elections in Iraq ... Maybe

Iraqis are slated to choose a national assembly to draft a permanent constitution. An elected government will take charge later this year. But violence threatens the proceedings. Dogged by insurgents, the United States has struggled to bring parts of the restive Sunni region of central Iraq under control. If they remain too hostile, elections will proceed without them. But experts fear that excluding the Sunnis could further inflame the insurgency.

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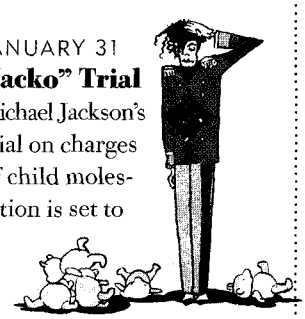
"Jacko" Trial



Michael Jackson's trial on charges of child molestation is set to begin today, in a media circus to rival Martha Stewart's. The alleged victim is a twelve-year-old cancer patient who, his attorneys claim, was kidnapped by Jackson and held until he agreed to produce a video statement exonerating Jackson of the charges. Jackson settled two earlier accusations of child molestation for $2 million and $15 million respectively—payments his lawyers say he now regrets.

FEBRUARY 17

The Gay Channel Debuts

Move over, *Will & Grace.* Hoping to tap into an audience of 15 million gay Americans (and the $485 billion they spend annually), MTV Networks launches Logo, a gay-and-lesbian cable network. The network plans to feature original programming, including *The Alan Cumming Experience* (a cabaret); *My Fabulous Gay Wedding* (a reality series); *The Big Gay 100* (a ranking of gay cultural icons); and *Family Outing* (a coming-out family show with Cher and her lesbian daughter, Chastity).

FEBRUARY 27

The Academy Awards

With no clear favorites for the top awards this year, Academy members can expect a huge ad blitz and plenty of controversy: the producers of *The Passion of the Christ* signaled their Oscar hopes by releasing the movie on DVD to coincide with the beginning of the awards season. And Michael Moore is competing for Best Picture—not Best Documentary—with his *Fahrenheit 9/11.*

—*MATTHEW QUIRK*

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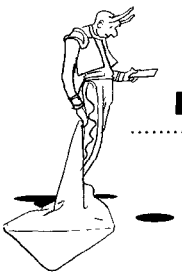

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bush's Lost Year

I was shocked by "Bush's Lost Year" (October *Atlantic*). James Fallows fails to credit the Bush administration with a single positive step in the war on terror; he discusses only the negatives.

Fallows paints the war in Afghanistan as a failure; it failed, he alleges, because we diverted resources to Iraq. But Afghanistan is now led by a strong and respected leader instead of the evil Taliban. Ten million Afghans have registered to vote, and the turnout for elections in Afghanistan may have been higher, in percentage terms, than the turnout for U.S. elections. Girls are attending school, which was forbidden under the Taliban. Women now may choose not to wear the burka and may even work outside the home. Afghans who want to be part of the modern world can listen to music and the radio and watch television. Afghanistan is still a dangerous place, and democracy won't take hold there for some time. But only a fool would expect it to be a model of perfection after its long history of bloodshed.

Fallows ignores all the successes we have achieved against al-Qaeda terrorists over the past three years. Most of the top leadership of al-Qaeda has been killed or captured. Al-Qaeda operatives are being rounded up all over the globe by our allies. Terrorists have been captured and brought to justice in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Germany, Spain, Italy, Yemen, and Turkey. The complex web of funding for *jihadi* terror groups is unraveling, and bank accounts are being frozen here and everywhere. Pakistan is now an ally, doing our dirty work by killing and arresting al-Qaeda members. The Khan nuclear-export business has been shut down. Libya is no longer a terror supporter bent on acquiring a nuclear weapon. Democracy is now being discussed in the Arab world as it has never been before.

Josh Baker
San Francisco, Calif.

James Fallows's thesis is fundamentally flawed. He fails to properly describe the aims of our enemy, and that failure leads him to present illusory choices for America in pursuit of that enemy. He says President Bush was simplistic in stating that Islamic terrorists hate America for its freedoms. He points to policy choices America has made—in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in Russia—as the real reasons for the hatred. The implication is that if we changed those policies that enrage our enemy, we would be less susceptible to attack.

This is appeasement, pure and simple. It won't work, because to our enemies the regional conflicts and issues Fallows describes are mere steppingstones on the way to their true objective, which is the establishment of Islam throughout the world. Fallows, like many others, refuses to take Osama bin Laden at his word, and that is dangerous indeed. To quote the historian Bernard Lewis in *What Went Wrong?*:

> For Osama bin Laden and those who share in his views—and they are many—the object of the struggle is the elimination of intrusive Western power and corrupting Western influence from *all* the lands of Islam, and the restoration of Islamic authenticity and authority in these lands. *When this has been accomplished, the stage will be set for the final struggle to bring God's message to all mankind in all the world.* [emphasis added]

The unpleasant reality is that no change in our policies in the face of Islamic terror would change the level of danger and terror we face. Only when our enemies understand that attacking us will result in the destruction of their entire civilization and its ideals will we have secured our right to live freely and safely.

David Beidler
Woodstock, N.Y.

James Fallows says the United States left the job of closing the Afghan-Pakistani border to the Pakistanis, a decision that allowed unknown numbers of al-Qaeda and Taliban members to escape.

An aspect of the story I've never seen covered was revealed to me at Fort Benning one month before the invasion of Iraq, during interviews I conducted for a documentary that was later distributed by Public Radio International. According to an infantry captain who fought in Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan (and who does not want his name used), our forces were deliberately deployed in a way that allowed the enemy an escape route. An anaconda, he explained, encircles its prey, and there was enough troop strength at or near the site to accomplish this. To his bafflement and dismay, however, troops (including his company) were deployed on only three sides of the operation, leaving an opening in the mountainous terrain leading directly to the Pakistani border. A fourth company was never sent into battle. This man had witnessed much carnage and put his own and his men's lives on the line to make the operation succeed. When I spoke with him, he was still demoralized by what he had observed. When I asked why he thought his superiors had, as it were, defeated their own battle plan, he said he believed it was to minimize American casualties; they assumed that al-Qaeda and the Taliban would fight to the death if totally surrounded, and that the resulting loss of life on our side might have compromised public support for the war.

Helen Borten
New York, N.Y.

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James Fallows replies:

My point about Afghanistan was that its reconstruction would have been faster, cheaper, and far more successful if the United States had not prematurely diverted money, manpower, and intense governmental attention to Iraq. This argument was based on the views of, among others, James Dobbins—the Bush administration's special envoy to Afghanistan—and Larry Goodson, of the Army War College, who has been an adviser to CENTCOM. The recent election in Afghanistan was a significant step forward. The many challenges that still imperil the country, notably the upsurge in its opium industry, would have been easier to contain two years ago.

Josh Baker's views regarding al-Qaeda reflect those conveyed by the "Wanted" poster and the deck of cards featuring Iraqi regime leaders—views that President Bush and other administration officials have often expressed. That is: with each known terrorist leader the United States captures, America comes that much closer to safety from terrorist attacks.

It is true that al-Qaeda's operations have been hampered by the loss of its sanctuaries and training camps in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda is now a different organization—more widely dispersed, less centrally controlled, and by all available measures more successful in attracting new members than it was before the war in Iraq. It is not necessarily a less dangerous organization than before. As for the spread of democracy in the Middle East, we'll see how events unfold.

David Beidler very clearly expresses a view of terrorism similar to the one that has guided the administration. The purpose of my article, again, was to explain why many people at the professional level of the military and intelligence agencies flatly disagree with this logic. The latest illustration (mentioned in this issue in "Success Without Victory") is the position of the Pentagon's own Defense Science Board, which says that America's anti-terror effort has only increased sources of future terrorist attacks.

The hypothesis Helen Borten reports is one of several explanations for why the al-Qaeda leadership escaped during Operation Anaconda. It is still too early to know which explanation is correct.

A Soldier's Perspective

I share James Fallows's gratitude for Stan Coerr's letter to the editor (November *Atlantic*), and honor his service. Like Major Coerr, I am frustrated by the spectacle of presumably responsible adults going to great lengths to obfuscate the relatively straightforward issue of why we went to war in Iraq.

We (the United Nations and, by extension, the United States) went to war in 1991 because Baathist Iraq had capped decades of spectacular misrule and abuse of sovereignty by invading and annexing a recognized and independent state, Kuwait.

That war, though passing through various levels of cease-fire, continued until the fall of Baghdad. Long before the invasion it had cost an enormous amount of money and more than a few American lives, and had brought intolerable suffering to the Iraqi people while strengthening the dictator's hand and enriching his collaborators. During this period Saddam Hussein's government was in material breach of many UN Security Council resolutions and terms of the cease-fire, as noted by everyone who has looked at the subject—from Kofi Annan and Hans Blix to Lord Goldsmith and every member of the Security Council. Gallup polling done twice a year since 1991 has always shown a majority of Americans favoring "the removal of Saddam Hussein, by force if necessary." This majority has at times approached three to one, and has averaged just under two to one. Currently, after Americans have been told for two years that the reasons we went to war were in fact WMD stockpiles and links between Iraq and al-Qaeda, and that we were lied to, opinion is closer to fifty-fifty.

This question of "why the liberation?" should not be confused with the ones concerning the grievous errors that have put the victory hard won by heroes like Major Coerr in jeopardy. Fallows deserves great credit for his excellent and timely analysis of both the potential problems ("The Fifty-first State?," November 2002 *Atlantic*) and the process by which many of them were realized ("Blind Into Baghdad," January/February 2004 *Atlantic*). Additional insight has been provided brilliantly in these pages by Robert Kaplan and William Langewiesche, keeping alive the legacies of Ernie Pyle and Michael Kelly, whose fates I pray they avoid. "Bush's Lost Year," however, is confused about the nature of the decision to liberate Iraq.

Full of unprovable assertions about the effect of the liberation on will-o'-the-wisps such as "world opinion" and terrorist "recruiting," it compounds the common error of misstating our goal in Afghanistan. We went there for one reason: to remove the platform of a nation-state from al-Qaeda, killing or capturing as many of those terrorists and their sponsors as we could in the process. This goal was swiftly and skillfully achieved. Bringing one of the poorest nations on earth up to the standards of a European state was never part of the deal, although the recent elections offer an inspiring vision of what may eventually be achievable there. Suggestions that we would have done better to replicate the Soviet strategy of sending armored columns banging around the Hindu Kush are risible; although such action would almost certainly not have resulted in the capture of Osama bin Laden, it might well have replicated the Soviet disaster in some regards, notably casualties. In contrast, Saddam's Iraq was one of the few places where the units designed to fight the Red Army in Europe could be usefully deployed against an enemy force. God forbid someone decides to take seriously the implication that perhaps they should have been used to invade Iran or North Korea.

Most Americans have long subscribed to the ideas that if dragged into war by an aggressive, genocidal dictatorship, we should try to win; that when we enter into a legally binding agreement with an enemy nation, we should insist that failure to adhere to the terms carry serious consequences; and that states that violate the international norms of conduct in such a way as to pose grave risks to our vital strategic and economic interests, and those of our allies, should be dealt with in a serious and effective way. On the facts, Baathist Iraq represented the world's clearest case of a

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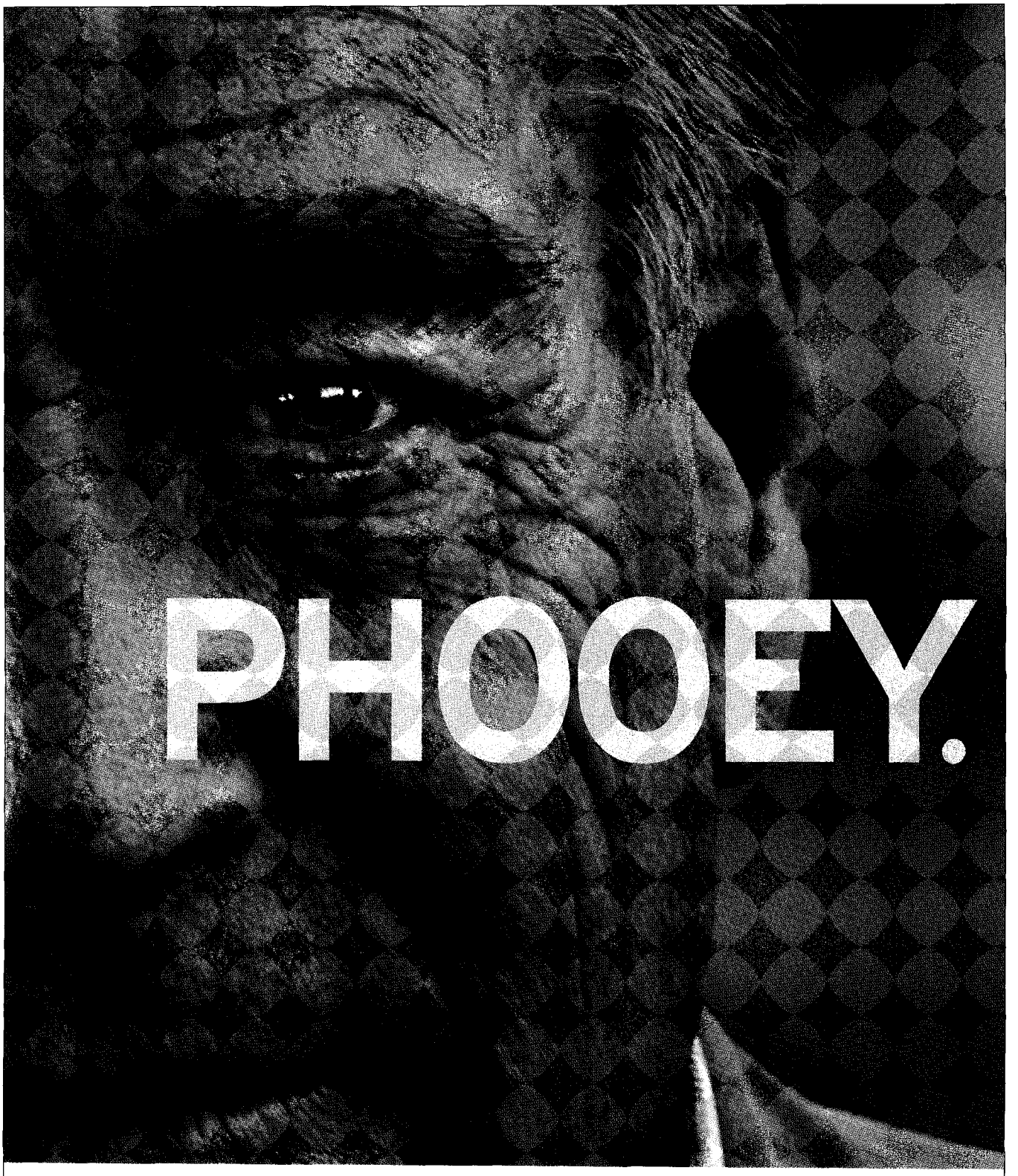

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rogue state that used its privileges of statehood to advance its dictator's interests in ways that defied and endangered the international state system. Shoring up that state system, the erosion of which is the principal issue in the ongoing war on terror, required an effective response; no rule works without enforcement. Avoiding this responsibility may be okay in an environment in which the UN is only a place to make charitable contributions and have endless meetings, but failed and failing states are *the* front in this new war. The UN and its principal sponsors, including the United States and Britain, have worked to proliferate states promiscuously since its founding. Now we must behave like responsible adults and guide the system toward maturity. It really is our generation's rendezvous with destiny.

Bob Powell
Gdynia, Poland

Stan Coerr's letter is poignant and compelling, and it is correct and accurate, but not *fully* correct or accurate. As a Marine rifleman with at least as much hands-on experience as Coerr, I'd like to say that all his sincerity and sacrifices do not alter the essence of what's going on in Iraq, any more than the sincerity and sacrifices of those of us who fought in Vietnam alter what that war was all about (Indochinese natural resources).

What we on the ground fight and fought for is and was indeed noble, but what our government was doing in 'Nam and is doing in Iraq is far from noble. In 'Nam we knew we were fighting a ruthless, totalitarian invading regime. What we did not realize until much later is that we were also propping up a corrupt regime our leaders had installed. We pulled out in 1973, and the corrupt South fell in 1975. In Iraq we toppled (quite a while ago, incidentally) an insane dictator our government had installed or propped up, but then we stayed and are still staying to install yet another bozo.

We in 'Nam fought, bled, and died for noble reasons, but the reasons we were sent there weren't noble at all. The bitterness of that pill is one Coerr has yet to sense.

Tex Wood
Stuart, Va.

I appreciated Major Coerr's letter, but a soldier's or even a field officer's point of view in a war, while painfully human, may have absolutely nothing to do with the reality of the bigger picture. His overused analogy about the abusive husband would be valid if the neighbors (the other Middle Eastern countries) took it upon themselves to do the necessary vigilantism. However, the American household, the Bush estate, was way on the other side of town, and if it was truly disturbed by what was going on in a less savory neighborhood, it should have taken the matter up with the local police (the United Nations). If the cops declined to intervene, perhaps they had good reason.

Clement Salvadori
Atascadero, Calif.

Editors' note:
We've received a number of letters reacting to Major Coerr's commentary, some questioning his identity, and still others noting that his remarks have been circulating on the Internet since the early months of 2003. Had we known the history of Major Coerr's letter we would not have published it. But Major Coerr is a real person, and his views are worthy of attention.

The Green Zone

I read the excellent cover story by William Langewiesche ("Welcome to the Green Zone," November *Atlantic*) with a sense of growing dread, the type of emotion that comes from having your worst suspicions confirmed. For many of us in international development, the administration's reconstruction policy in Iraq has been at best opaque. This has been particularly troubling for those of us who contributed resources to the State Department's postwar planning process. We did so despite our concerns about the administration's prior attacks on "nation-building," and at least in the beginning many of us were doggedly optimistic, hoping that an appreciation for the complexity of winning the peace had finally arrived. Gradually we saw signs that our nation's years of development experience were being not simply discounted but systematically excluded altogether. The foolish march away from expertise is perhaps most poignantly symbolized by the ultimate marginalization of the State Department in the whole process.

With a few exceptions, such as Fern Holland, a strong conservative bent characterized the recruiting of those charged with reconstructing civil institutions. Relatively few of the seasoned veterans from the Balkans, East Timor, or Sierra Leone were consulted or even approached. Instead the administration focused on those who conformed to its political designs. Bright, well-educated conservatives signed up in surprising numbers for exactly the mission they had so recently reviled: nation-building.

Last spring at a conference at the University of Georgia one seasoned veteran, General Shinseki, calmly reaffirmed his position on the relationship between security and winning the peace, and he did so without a hint of vindictiveness. If anything, his speech conveyed to those of us there a sense of underlying sorrow for the worsening plight of his fellow men and women in uniform. As a veteran of more-successful post-conflict efforts, he knows very well the difference between lessons identified and lessons learned, and this distinction could not be more important for the successful reconstruction of a troubled and war-torn place like Iraq.

Scott Carlson
Washington, D.C.

"Welcome to the Green Zone" brought back great memories of my six months working in the Republican Palace in Baghdad. Although I can attest to much of what William Langewiesche reports, his characterization of the CPA and its people occasionally misses the mark. The CPA Office of General Counsel did indeed do yeoman's work nipping illegal, unethical, or just unwise policy in the bud. Also, as he says, the lack of internal news was frustrating (*What were those four loud explosions yesterday?*). On the other hand, Langewiesche will be happy to learn that after Fern Hol-

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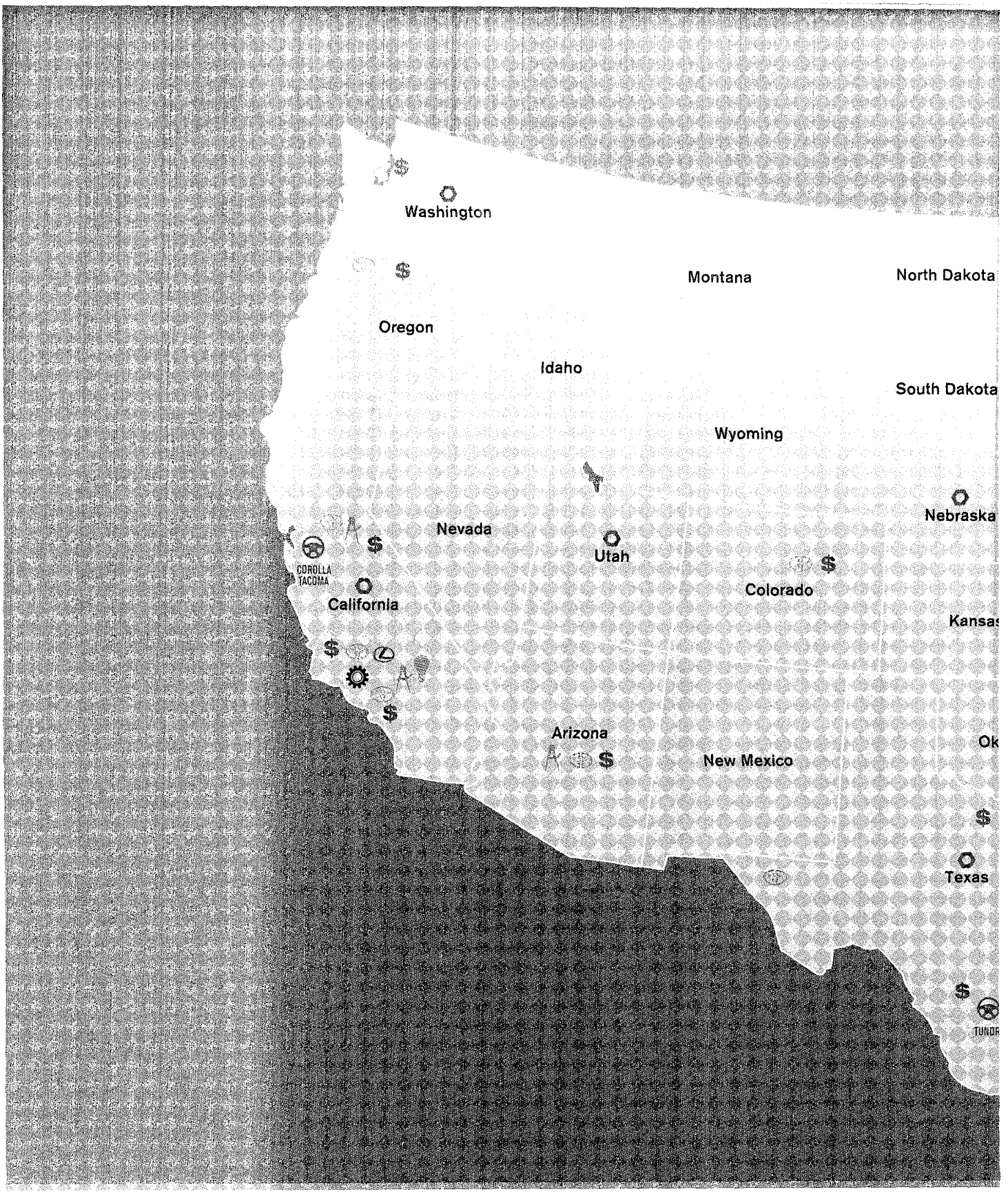

The states of our operations today.

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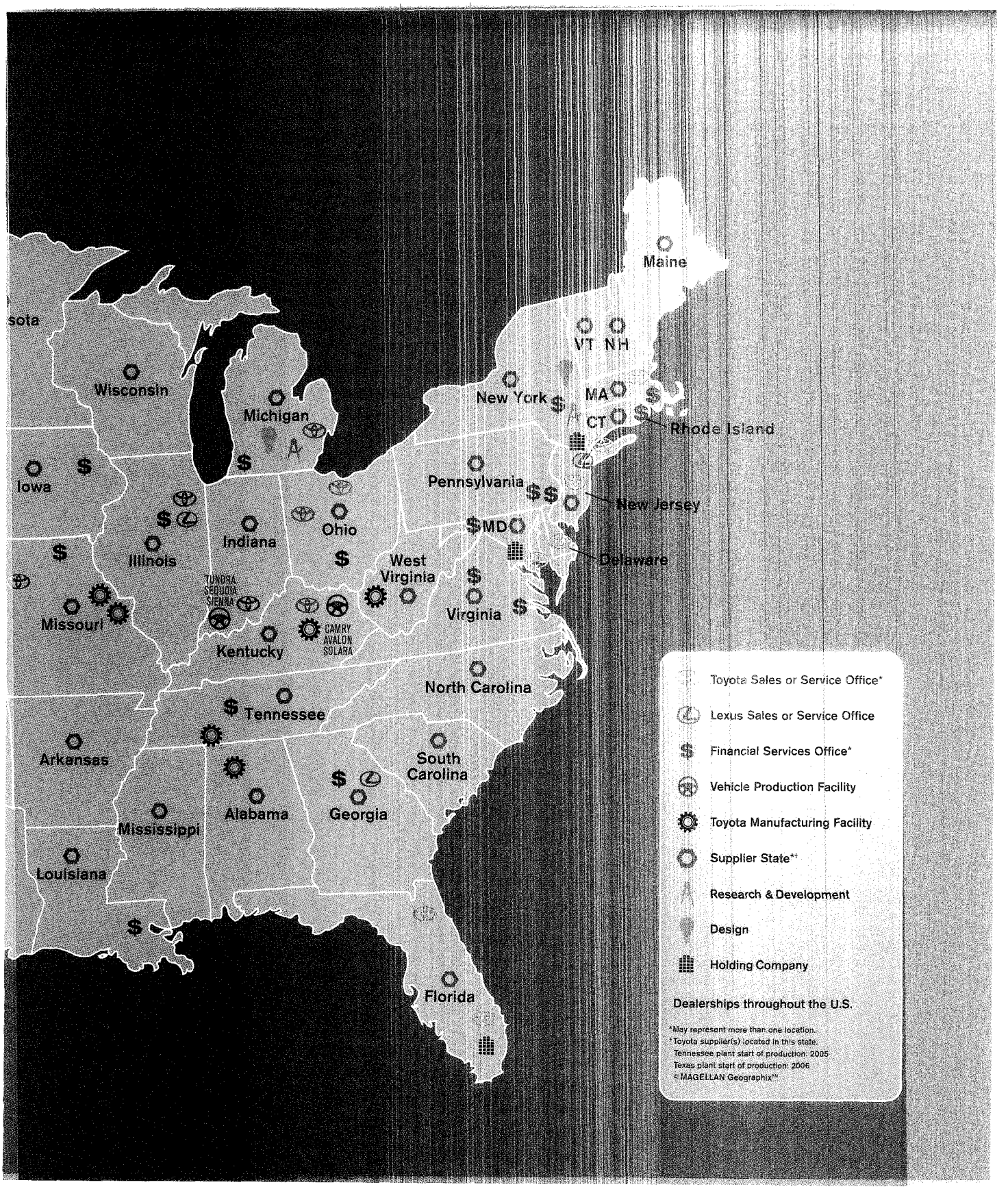

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Manufacturing

Since 1986, over 10 million Toyotas have been built right here in the U.S.* In fact, more than half the Toyotas we sell here are built here. Toyota currently has eight vehicle and parts manufacturing facilities in the U.S., with two more under construction. In 2003, over one million quality cars and trucks were produced here.

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Our commitment to environmental leadership is evident in both our manufacturing processes and our automotive technology. Since 1999, we've reduced landfill waste at our facilities by 50%.

And Prius, the top-selling hybrid vehicle in the United States, boasts the best EPA-estimated fuel economy rating of any mid-size vehicle sold here.

Research and Development

In 1973, Toyota established Calty Design Research Inc., California's first automotive design center. And in 1977, we opened the Toyota Technical Center (TTC), which now represents a $254 million investment and provides 684 American jobs through three locations. In fact, TTC headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is the second-largest Toyota research and development facility in the world. Here, TTC conducted a significant majority of the engineering development for the 2004 Sienna and the 2004 Camry Solara. Our operations in Ann Arbor continue to grow with the recent opening of our new Calty satellite design studio.

Community

Since 1987, the Toyota USA Foundation has actively supported math and science education initiatives through one-time grants. We are also a title sponsor of National Public Lands Day, the largest one-day volunteer cleanup of our nation's parks. And in 2004, Toyota held its fifteenth annual Opportunity Exchange, an event that connects over 600 minority suppliers with more than 250 Toyota suppliers.

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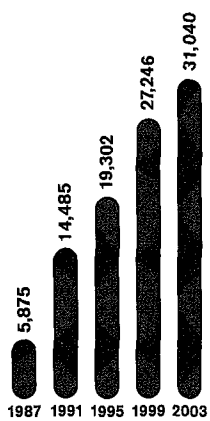

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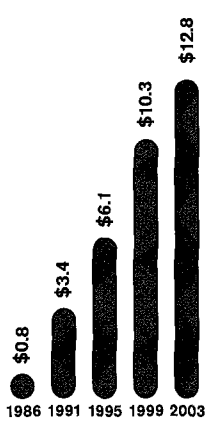
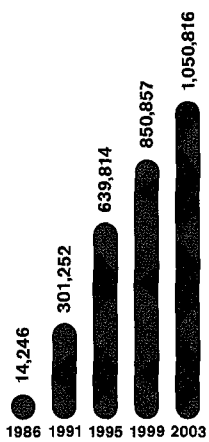


U.S. Vehicle Production



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land's murder, when some folks curtailed trips outside the Green Zone, many advisers continued their trips, though in a more underground fashion—risking not only injury but official sanction. And he understates the coalition nature of the CPA: several of our coalition partners sent their "first team" players.

In the end the CPA was a fascinating cross section of population: teenage soldiers, fresh-scrubbed twentysomethings just out of college, mid-career people in our thirties and forties, and quite a few folks working toward their third retirement (read sixties and seventies).

Langewiesche has the start of a very good book, which I hope he writes.

Tedd Ogren
Burke, Va.

I was very impressed with the depth and detail of "Welcome to the Green Zone," especially William Langewiesche's stories of the citizens, political players, and soldiers who make up the population of this "bubble" in central Baghdad. I was interested to read, too, about the U.S. Coast Guard officer who arrived in Iraq to help set up transportation infrastructure, and I wanted to answer Langewiesche's query in the last paragraph about the U.S. Coast Guard's official song.

According to the eighth edition of *The Coast Guardsman's Manual*, "Semper Paratus" (meaning "always ready") was written and composed by Captain Francis Van Boskerck over a five-year period (1922–1927), with the help of two U.S. Public Health officers, Alf Nannestad and Joseph Fournier. Captain Van Boskerck was an officer in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, a precursor to the modern Coast Guard, and *Semper paratus* had become the Coast Guard's motto circa 1910, when it first appeared on the Coast Guard flag. Today the song continues to be performed at many Coast Guard functions, and "semper p" is frequently used to denote someone in the Guard who is enthusiastic, responsible, and energetic.

Matthew Solak
U.S. Coast Guard Reserve
New London, Conn.

More Homework

Jonathan Rauch ("Now, for Tonight's Assignment . . . ," November *Atlantic*) is right to suggest that one small solution to the education crisis is to assign students more homework. When any school system makes a serious homework commitment to its students, it is saying that it cares enough about learning and skill acquisition to set the bar high both in and outside the classroom; that it believes students benefit from rigorous, independent work outside the classroom; and that it has the resources to provide teachers with a manageable student load and time during the day to grade homework.

However, this homework solution works only in school systems and communities that have the resources to help students complete their homework successfully. For example, in a heterogeneous high school class where half the students have non-English-speaking parents, many students will probably not be able to turn to an adult at home when they are stumped on a literary essay or a calculus problem. The homework assignment in these cases can become a roadblock to further success rather than a road to higher achievement.

S. E. Greenwood
Chicago, Ill.

I suggest that Jonathan Rauch's idea for students to spend more time doing homework could be accomplished nicely through the simple addition of reading at home. Reading becomes habitual, and the habit of reading correlates better with lifelong learning than does even the most academic of pursuits, and without the baggage of being "homework."

Scott Conyers
Aurora, Ore.

Jonathan Rauch is correct that laziness is the reason American students are not going to be given more homework. The lazy ones, however, are the parents, not the students. More homework would put more of a burden on parents to devote time to, to oversee, and perhaps even to participate in their children's education.

James L. Stroud
Tucson, Ariz.

Jonathan Rauch writes, "You may . . . not be shocked to learn that, for the most part, American students don't do much homework." The other side of the coin is that in some cases teachers don't assign much homework. All teachers know that in order to teach effectively they have to assign homework, and collect and grade it. This is a lot of work. Teachers quickly discover that they get paid the same whether they do this extra work or not. Furthermore, students are happier, parents are relieved, and the school administration is appreciative if little or no homework is assigned. Teachers get awards and promotions based on popularity contests called teaching evaluations. Students choose courses based on which teacher has a reputation for not making students work very hard. Many students consider it a "win" if they can get a degree without having to learn very much, and teachers "win" by getting promotions and tenure while doing the minimum. Society loses.

William Haloupek
Mount Laurel, N.J.

Jonathan Rauch believes that if schools simply add more homework to the educational program of all but the youngest students, those students will learn more. But the author himself notes that a significant majority of U.S. secondary school students are doing the bare minimum to get by, so the challenge is not assigning students more work but actually getting them to do it. The less intrinsically motivated the students, the greater the external effort required to make sure that they actually spend their time on task in meaningful activities that increase their learning.

The notion that more homework, especially with this unmotivated population, is a virtually costless fix to the student-achievement problem is remarkably naive. A teacher's assigning work is certainly no guarantee that students will actually complete it. In order to assure that the work is done, teachers must thoughtfully review and evaluate it. This, Rauch would have us forget, takes time, and that comes at a cost. Given that most teachers are paid salaries based primarily on actual classroom hours, and that

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the few paid hours beyond instruction time are already crowded with preparation, administrative tasks, and grading, they have little reason to implement a practice that will force them to give up more leisure hours at a wage of $0. Ask any first-year teacher what happens when one assigns homework but doesn't evaluate it; it takes little time for students to respond to subsequent assignments with indifference. And the more demanding and "cheat-proof" the assignments, the greater the time required to evaluate the work.

Elisabeth Hensley
Berkeley, Calif.

Jonathan Rauch admirably cuts through much cant to identify student laziness as an impediment to improving education. When I switched careers to become a high school teacher, five years ago, one of the many surprises was that students routinely blew off homework assignments. On average, 50 to 60 percent simply didn't do the work, and this remained consistent regardless of my efforts to encourage or cajole them. I agree with Rauch that public acknowledgment of this phenomenon is necessary to remedy the situation. In addition, other steps might help:

1) Reduce class size. In my district, Prince George's County, Maryland, many high school teachers have 170 to 200 students each. Carefully grading that much homework (particularly written assignments) is onerous, and downright impossible without putting in long hours of unpaid overtime.

2) Eliminate staggered schedules, in which students take certain subjects in eighty- or ninety-minute classes every second day. Engaging teenagers for these time blocks is extremely difficult, and teachers are strongly tempted to have students do homework (or what amounts to homework) in class. This pattern begins in middle school, so by high school students are accustomed to having little if any homework. The staggered schedule has no demonstrated pedagogic value; it is simply a way to cram in more students per teacher.

3) Restrict part-time employment. Students who are lazy about doing homework can be remarkably energetic at part-time jobs, where they earn the spending money so vital to acquiring the latest sneakers or CD player. Exhausted kids do little homework.

I've no illusions that Rauch's reasonable recommendations will be implemented, much less my own. In each instance reform would require acknowledgment of unpleasant realities—not only that many kids are lazy but that their parents and representatives are as well.

Jonathan F. Keiler
Bowie, Md.

Embedded Reporter

Robert D. Kaplan's "The Media and the Military" (November *Atlantic*) illuminates the increasing gap between "cosmopolitan" American elites and the military by saying that "the blue-collar element that once kept print journalism honest has been gone for some time," and cites the embedding of reporters in military units as a way to reconnect.

Whereas American elites once contributed mightily to military service, if only for brief stints during times of need, their absence today is glaring. Evidence that the military is evolving into an increasingly homogeneous socio-economic class is widely known, but more important than who is serving in today's military may be who is not. The sons of Prescott Bush and Joseph Kennedy fought bravely in combat; it is almost impossible to imagine the grandsons of that old American class doing the same.

One in every twenty artillery officers at the end of World War I was a Yale graduate, but only twelve Yale graduates entered service from 1986 to 2002. In 1939, 350 Princeton students enrolled in ROTC, but only seven enrolled in 2001. Granted, a world war was looming in 1939, but in 2001 classes were larger and women were also eligible. American elites seem to have gone from running battlefields as soldiers to covering them as reporters.

The change came during the 1960s and Vietnam. As David Halberstam (a Harvard graduate who won a Pulitzer for his Vietnam coverage) points out, "almost as many people from Harvard won Pulitzer prizes in Vietnam as died there." As David Brooks writes in *Bobos in Paradise*, on the *New York Times* weddings page—the modern barometer of elite status—mentions of military academies have declined considerably since the 1950s.

However, elites shouldn't take all the blame; military recruiters seek those recruits who are likely to serve full careers and reject those who aren't, as the 9/11 Commission head John Lehman and the military sociologist and Northwestern professor Charles Moskos have asserted. Because this strategy means recruiting men and women with ostensibly fewer job prospects, it has led to Kaplan's "working-class" military. (The service is also homogeneous in many other ways, including politically; it increasingly identifies itself with the Republican Party, as Kaplan often mentions.) Although the Air Force is attempting to correct this problem with shorter enlistment times, to attract those elites who wish to serve but understandably don't want to make the military a career, the military as a whole still has a way to go.

Reid Mitenbuler
Washington, D.C.

Although Robert Kaplan's essay is well written, and some of his notions are accurate, he is wrong that the media have a problem understanding, appreciating, and writing about the military's noncommissioned-officer corps because of class differences.

Kaplan makes a number of valid points about the class-and-values divide between many in the military and those outside it, including politicians and journalists. But he lacks a fundamental understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of most journalists who cover the military full-time.

For the past decade I have covered the U.S. military in the South and in Washington, D.C. During that time the two most enjoyable experiences I've had on the beat were the long periods I spent with Staff Sergeant Julio Soto, an Army recruiter, and with a group of drill sergeants at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

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military today. I would not trade those two assignments for all the interviews I've since conducted with top Pentagon generals and others who Kaplan might think represent higher social strata than the enlisted military.

Many of my friends and colleagues who cover the beat for *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other publications feel the same way. Any opportunity to be with the troops, to talk to them and write about who they are and what they do, is valued highly. Many of the best stories produced during recent fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq were written, with great humanity, about the enlisted soldiers and noncommissioned officers from whom Kaplan believes the media are estranged.

Dave Moniz
USA Today
Alexandria, Va.

Robert D. Kaplan replies:
Dave Moniz is correct. As I noted in the article, military correspondents for the major media are in a class by themselves.

Wodehouse and the Fascists

Christopher Hitchens writes, "It's quite impossible that the man who had invented Sir Roderick Spode in 1938 was prey to any covert sympathy for fascism" ("The Honorable Schoolboy," November *Atlantic*). Yet Michael Straight wrote in his autobiography, *After Long Silence*,

> We rented an elegant house in Mayfair [in 1932] from the writer P. G. Wodehouse. As a parting gesture, he gave a dinner in our honor to which he invited his glamorous friends. He raised his glass to toast us, and when the ladies had departed, voiced his conviction that Hitler and Mussolini were strong leaders who deserved our wholehearted support.

Now, it is possible that Straight was deviously maligning Wodehouse. But it is also possible that Wodehouse did for a time own an admiration for Hitler and Mussolini that faded as he saw their true colors, just as the enthusiasm for communism among many fellow travelers faded in the 1930s with the advent of Stalin's purges and the Nazi-Soviet pact.

Tony Percy
Southport, N.C.

Christopher Hitchens replies:
I had the uncertain honor of interviewing Michael Straight on the publication of After Long Silence, *and now of course wish that I had asked him about Wodehouse. At the time, though, I had to chop my way through such a thicket of self-serving deceptions and evasions, on what seemed to be weightier matters, that I missed the opportunity.*

Since Hitler was not "a leader" in 1932, and was not widely expected to become one, I find I can't believe in a Wodehouse who advocated the replacement of Bruning or Hindenburg, or who would have known how to do so. A lot of tripe, however, was talked about the charm and effectiveness of Mussolini in those days. Tough guys like Churchill fell for him, as did humanist saps like George Bernard Shaw. It's not impossible that Wodehouse made some fatuous remark about the trains' running on time: if so, he seems to have profited from the fatuity by 1938, the year he lampooned Spode and the Black Shorts.

Advice & Consent

As a member of Harold See's kitchen cabinet in his 1996 campaign for a seat on the Alabama Supreme Court, I worked with Karl Rove. Joshua Green ("Karl Rove in a Corner," November *Atlantic*) says Rove secretly produced and distributed flyers attacking See and his family in order to create a backlash against See's opponent. Until Green's article appeared I had never heard of any such flyers. I have spoken with others involved in the leadership of the campaign, and they hadn't either. The campaign was widely covered, and books have been written about Rove, but no mention of these alleged flyers has ever previously appeared in print.

See's opponent ran television attack ads that were so ugly they gained national media attention. A political-science professor at Auburn University was reported to have said that the campaign against See was "the most disgusting campaign run by anyone seeking statewide judicial office in the state's history." That campaign is what created a backlash. *The Montgomery Advertiser* said, "See's victory in that race was one of the most satisfying repudiations of intentionally misleading advertising in history." Ironically, when faced with this assault Rove repeatedly counseled the See campaign to stick to legitimate issues.

Larry Childs
Birmingham, Ala.

Joshua Green replies:
I have no reason to doubt Larry Childs's recollections, nor would I dispute his assessment of the campaign against Harold See as extraordinarily negative; it was. In regard to his comment that he and others were not aware of all that went on in the See campaign, I trust they're now better informed.

I strongly take issue with a college admissions officer's categorization of me as a "saleswoman" who provides a frivolous service ("unnecessary orthodontia") to students applying to college ("Independent Counsel," by Nicholas Confessore, October *Atlantic*). Getting into college is a competitive process, and an independent counselor helps high school students choose courses and activities, improve their relationships with their teachers and peers, maintain a positive attitude even in the face of failure or setbacks, create ways to make an impact in their high school community, find the joy in scholarship, plan for standardized testing, research the best college matches, plan college visits, brainstorm and edit college essays, and prepare for college interviews. As Nicholas Confessore points out, "soft" measures are the most important criteria in differentiating an applicant and making the final grade before admissions directors. And they are precisely the parts of the application on which college consultants can have the most influence.

Katherine Cohen
Founder, IvyWise
New York, N.Y.

Editors' note:
Tapes aired by the 9/11 Commission show that Betty Ong, an attendant on American Airlines Flight 11, spoke calmly to a ground supervisor, not in the terrified tones reported in the initial newspaper account and repeated in William Langewiesche's "The Rush to Recover" (September 2002 Atlantic*), based on the only public information available at the time.*

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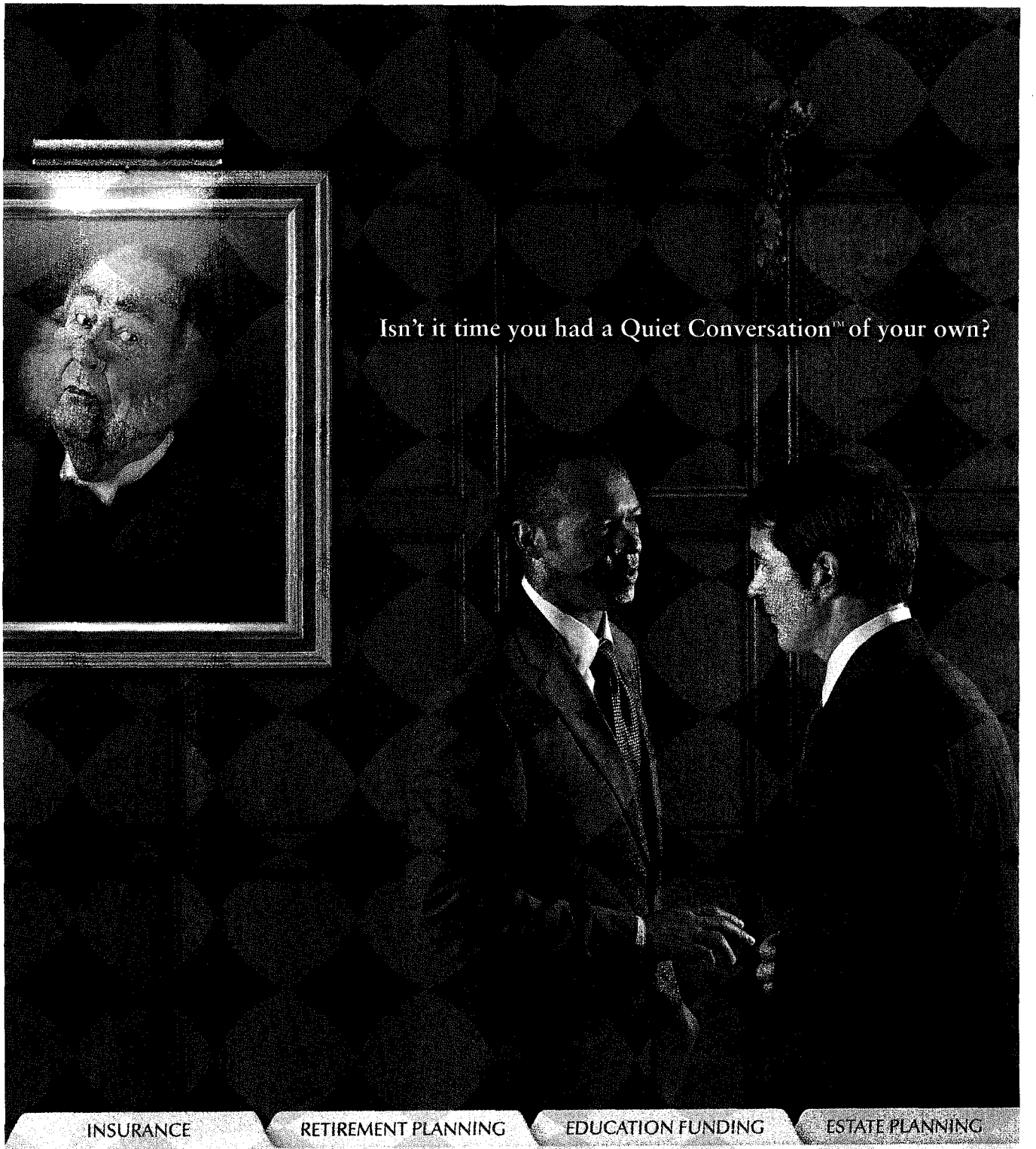

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COMMENT

Clintonism, R.I.P.

How triangulation became strangulation

BY CHUCK TODD

With the 2004 election past and the losing party's ritual period of self-appraisal about to yield to George W. Bush's second term, the Democrats appear to have learned two small lessons and to have missed a much larger one. Of the two small lessons, one follows naturally from the other: first, the election demonstrated that the Democrats are becoming less competitive in much of the country, and second, it suggested that they cannot hope to regain the presidency or control of Congress until that changes. The reason they've lost ground, we've been told ceaselessly, is that many Americans believe the party is deficient in "moral values" and cast their votes accordingly. There is some debate about whether values played the decisive role or just a minor one—but no debating that something is wrong.

What's been missing is a discussion of how the Democratic Party arrived at this point; that requires a broader view, encompassing both parties' most recent periods of triumph and focusing particularly on the major difference between the evolving political legacies of George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. As a candidate each sought to distance himself from his party's reigning image—Bush through "compassionate conservatism" and Clinton through a "third way" approach between liberalism and conservatism. Each succeeded well enough to win two terms. And each is now viewed within his party as something close to the ideal.

The difference is that Bush measurably strengthened the Republican Party along the way, whereas Clinton worried mainly about his own political fortunes, to the detriment of his party. Every election under Bush has resulted in Republican gains in Congress; in sharp contrast, Clinton assumed office with his party in control of the House, the Senate, and a majority of governorships, and left it with none of those advantages. Since Clinton, Democratic losses have deepened and broadened to include both subsequent presidential races, in which the Democratic nominees dutifully adopted Clinton's strategy of centrist triangulation. The results so starkly apparent on November 2 should prompt a question that, though still heretical to Democrats, is worthy of being posed here: Is it time to retire Clintonism as a political philosophy?

The modern Democratic Party looks at Clinton's presidency as a period of unquestioned success, and its perceived lessons continue to

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hold tremendous sway. Foremost is the belief that the party's path to victory, blazed by Clinton, lies in packaging liberal or centrist ideas into easily digestible bites that together constitute a core set of values—in a word, Clintonism. At its best this approach allowed Clinton to dissociate himself (and, by extension, his party) from many of the unpopular liberal policies of the past, steering a course between traditional liberal and conservative positions with bold and often controversial plans for highly charged issues such as race, welfare reform, and free trade, and in the process managing to neutralize many of the old criticisms. At first, as with all that is new in politics, those accustomed to the old way of doing things treated these ideas as if they were radioactive. Clinton eventually proved them wrong. But political ideas have a half-life.

The success of Clintonism was not due to the electoral strategy Clinton bequeathed to his party. That has proved disastrous.

It is hard to overstate the reverence in which Clinton is held by professional Democratic operatives, many of whom served in his administration and today constitute the party's major powers. This group has hewed faithfully to the tenets of Clintonism, staunch in its belief that Democratic candidates can neutralize troublesome issues simply by triangulating, as Clinton did, and prevail with a list of issues nearly identical to the one Clinton touted. But as Al Gore, John Kerry, and countless lesser Democrats have tried this approach and failed, one thing has become clearer and clearer: the success of Clintonism was due primarily to the period in which Clinton governed and to his remarkable political skills—not to the electoral strategy he bequeathed to his party.

The latter has proved disastrous. And its cost cannot be measured merely in lost campaigns. Absent Clinton's high-profile foes—at the outset of his presidency, a paleo-liberal congressional leadership on one side and radical-conservative revolutionaries on the other—the habit of splitting the difference on difficult issues comes across as crassly political, more so when one lacks Clinton's unique personal charisma. The more John Kerry attempted to do this (on national security, gay marriage, Iraq), the more the effect was magnified, until the long-standing criticism of Clinton—that he didn't really *stand* for anything—became the definitive charge against Kerry. In the end Kerry, like his party, seemed to draw exactly the wrong lesson from Clinton's example, mimicking his tactics and politics with liturgical precision, but never managing to replicate the sense of a new direction that carried Clinton into office. The result was a candidate and a party with apparently no core set of values.

For those who don't share the faith—Republicans, for instance—Clintonism is in fact a code word for moral ambivalence. In this sense, too, Clintonism proved poisonous to Democrats in vast swaths of the country. To take just one example: Erskine Bowles, of North Carolina, lost another bid for the U.S. Senate primarily for the offense of having served as Clinton's White House chief of staff. And although it has been largely overlooked, perhaps the most remarkable statistic from the 2004 election is the record of those candidates for whom Clinton campaigned: all eight lost.

The Democrats' plight is not unprecedented. Following Ronald Reagan's presidency the Republicans spent a similar time in the wilderness, in similar fealty to a great leader. Although George H.W. Bush did win a term, the Republican Party was basically adrift for the decade after Reagan—robbed of Reagan's great adversary after the collapse of communism, yet still hampered by the impression that it was harsh and uncaring on social issues. That changed only when Karl Rove and George W. Bush arrived and at last pushed the party beyond the grip of Reagan and his strategists. In the bloodless aftermath of the 2004 election the Democratic Party has shown scant awareness of a crisis—and shedding its addiction to Clinton could take just as long.

In the old Soviet Union the politburo had the ability to destroy all traces of a previous Party leader if his specter suddenly became troublesome. There are two ways the Democrats' Clinton problem can be solved. One is if Hillary Clinton runs successfully for the presidency in 2008, redeeming Clintonism as both a tactic and a philosophy. The other is if the party severs ties to Bill Clinton and those most closely associated with him, relegating him to the mythic status Reagan achieved, as someone whose great symbolic power for the party faithful can be celebrated and invoked—but only from a safe distance.

In the coming weeks and months George W. Bush will start trying to make good on a series of campaign promises that are every bit as daunting as were Clinton's efforts to reform welfare, expand health care, and balance the budget: Bush will attempt to partially privatize Social Security, rewrite the tax code, and limit plaintiff awards in lawsuits. Whether history ultimately judges these to be momentous successes, like balancing the budget, or colossal failures, like Clinton's attempt to reform health care, remains to be seen. What is clear already is that they are new ideas of the sort long absent from the Democratic Party. One can also surmise that, as controversial as many of them may be, voters prefer them to the ideas of an opposing campaign that once again seemed as though it was run in the service of nostalgia.

Just after the Republican triumph in the midterm elections Bill Clinton himself arrived at a moment of clarity for the Democrats when he declared that it is better to be "wrong and strong" than "weak and right." The irony, of course, is that Clinton rarely practiced as president what he now preaches as statesman. But if the Democratic Party is to draw a real lesson from the election and halt its own decline, it will heed Clinton's advice rather than the example of his presidency.

Chuck Todd is the editor in chief of The Hotline *and an* Atlantic *contributing editor.*

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Widening Atlantic

Our growing transatlantic estrangement has less to do with George W. Bush's foreign policy than with deep social changes in Europe

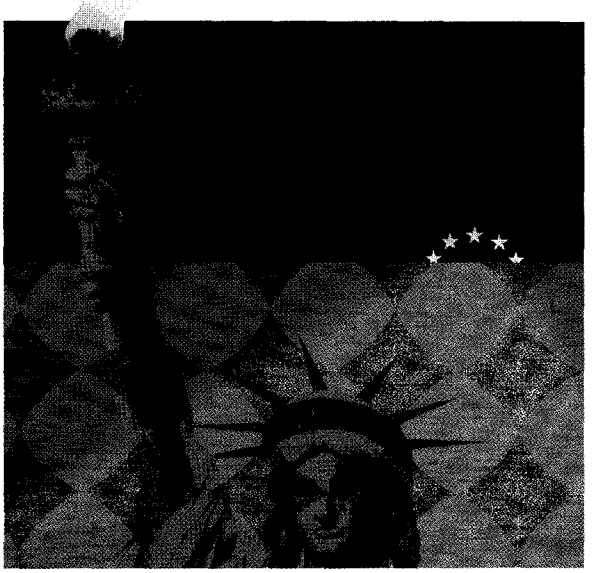
BY NIALL FERGUSON

Seldom, if ever, has an American president been less popular in Europe than George W. Bush. As cartoonists never tire of illustrating, he embodies those American characteristics that Europeans most dislike: trigger-happiness, environmental unfriendliness, and—perhaps most important—utter indifference to the delicate sensibilities of America's traditional Western European allies. In the past two years, according to a survey published this past fall by the German Marshall Fund, the proportion of Europeans who disapprove of U.S. foreign policy has risen by 20 percentage points, to exceed 76 percent. An even higher proportion—80 percent—think that Bush's invasion of Iraq was not worth the consequences. And 73 percent think that it has increased rather than reduced the risk of terrorism.

According to a poll conducted by Globescan and the University of Maryland, 74 percent of Germans wanted to see John Kerry beat Bush in November, while only 10 percent favored the president. Even in the United Kingdom the public backed Kerry over Bush by 47 percent to 16 percent. During the campaign Kerry sought to capitalize on his popularity abroad, claiming repeatedly that if elected, he could persuade unspecified allies to assist the United States in Iraq. We will never know what a Kerry administration might have accomplished. But it is hard to imagine that it could have healed the transatlantic rift, for the gap between America and Europe has been widening for fifteen years, and it has much more to do with changes in Europe than with the policies of the United States.

This is not a fashionable view, least of all in academic circles. A clear majority of those who think, write, and talk about international relations for a living believe that the transatlantic alliance system—what used to be known simply as "the West"—can and must be restored, by means of adjustments in U.S. policy.

The Oxford historian and journalist Timothy Garton Ash argues in his new book, *Free World*, that the United States and the European Union have too many common interests to become permanently estranged. He sees "no inexorable drifting apart of two solid continental plates" but, rather, "overlapping continental shelves." In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Robert E. Hunter, a senior adviser to the RAND Corporation and a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, also called for a shoring up of the Atlantic alliance. The Bush administration's "experiment in unilateralism," he wrote, had merely revealed "the limits of such an approach." Kenneth Pollack, a member of the National Security Council under Bill Clinton and now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, urges the Bush administration to work in tandem with the Europeans to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions.



Nevertheless, there are three strong reasons for doubting that real transatlantic rapprochement is possible.

First, we must not forget the primary reason for the formation of the transatlantic alliance, in the 1940s and 1950s: to keep the Soviet Union behind the Iron Curtain. We should not deceive ourselves that the French and the Germans—or, for that matter, the British—were passionately pro-American during the Cold War. But as long as a Russian empire was menacing Western Europe with missiles, troops, and spooks, there was an overwhelming practical argument for the unity of the West.

With astonishing speed, that ceased to be the case fifteen years ago, when the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev caused the Soviet empire to crumble. Incentives for transatlantic harmony have grown steadily weaker since 1989. President Vladimir Putin is manifestly no democrat, but not even his fiercest critics expect him to launch a Russian invasion across the Central European plains in the near future.

The second reason the West is unlikely to come back together is the difference in the ways Europe and the United States assess the risk of Islamic extremism. To Americans, Islamism has effectively replaced Soviet communism as a mortal danger. To Europeans, the threat of Islamic terrorists today is simply not comparable to that posed by the Red Army twenty years ago—not great enough, in other words, to require transatlantic solidarity under U.S. leadership. Indeed, ever since the Spanish elections early last year, many Europeans have behaved as if the optimal response to the growing threat of Islamist terrorism is to distance Europe from the United States.

Why? The answer is not far to seek. As a result of rising immigration from the south and the east, there are now at least 15 million Muslims within the European Union, and some say more than 20 million: that is, anything between three and five percent of the population. And these proportions seem

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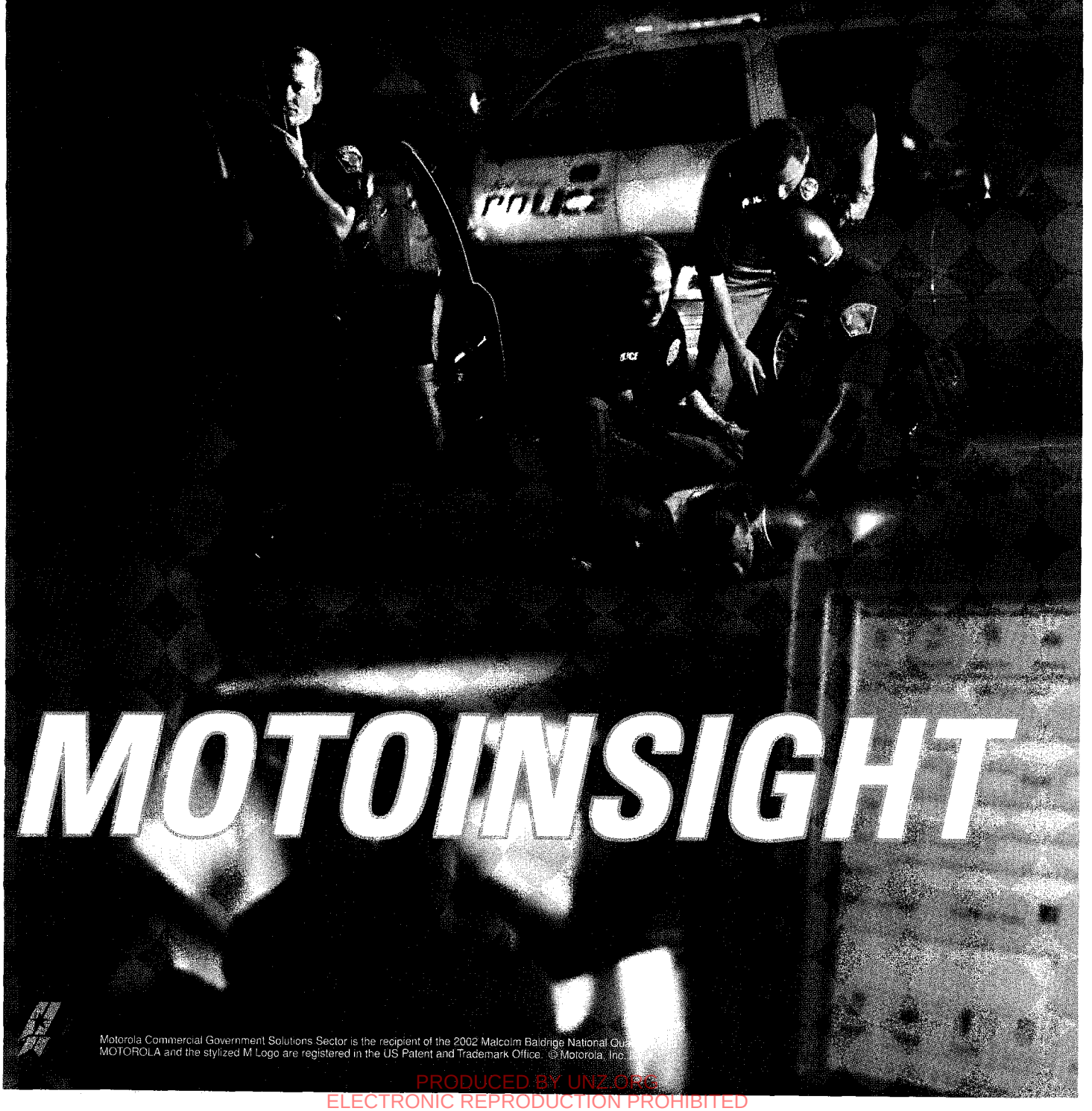

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CASE HISTORY

PRESIDENTIAL AILMENTS

An inauguration is a good time to take stock of the health of the man who will guide the country for the next four years. Though health issues played only a minor role in the 2004 campaign (John Kerry easily overcame his prostate cancer, and George Bush is a veritable gym rat), medical problems have profoundly affected some U.S. presidents. Most were less profound than the pneumonia that William Henry Harrison contracted at his inauguration and died from a month later. None was more unpleasant than the anal fissure said to have tormented James Garfield (except, perhaps, the rectal feeding prescribed during the eighty-one days it took him to die from an assassin's bullet, in 1881). Still, there is always the fear that a president could be physically incapacitated. A look back at the medical records reveals numerous presidential ailments; *here is a list of some maladies* suffered by the past ten U.S. presidents during their political careers. —*NATHAN LITTLEFIELD AND BENJAMIN HEALY*

George W. Bush. Torn meniscus in one knee; three actinic keratoses (pre-cancerous skin lesions) on the face; colonic polyps; loss of consciousness after choking on a pretzel.

Bill Clinton. Torn right quadriceps tendon; reflux esophagitis (acid-reflux disease); partial loss of hearing in both ears; allergies (to mold spores, dust, weed pollen, grass pollen, cats, beef, and milk); rectal bleeding (for which he underwent a colonoscopy).

George H.W. Bush. Graves' disease (hyperthyroidism), which caused atrial fibrillations and hand tremors (he was treated with digitalis and procainamide, both of which can affect brain function); insomnia (for which he took Halcion until 1992, after it had been banned in Great Britain); flu (which caused him to vomit on the prime minister of Japan and then faint); early glaucoma in the left eye; mild degenerative arthritis; actinic keratoses.

Ronald Reagan. Enlarged (non-cancerous) prostate; basal-cell carcinoma (skin cancer) on the nose; colon cancer (treatment for which removed two feet of his colon); colonic polyps; partial hearing loss in both ears; a collapsed lung (after the 1981 assassination attempt); severe nearsightedness.

Jimmy Carter. A broken collarbone sustained while cross-country skiing; hemorrhoids.

Gerald Ford. Despite a reputation for clumsiness, Ford suffered no injuries requiring treatment. (Among the fittest presidents, he skied, golfed, swam, and played tennis.)

Richard Nixon. Phlebitis (inflammation of a vein); pneumonia requiring hospitalization.

Lyndon Johnson. Heart attack; skin cancer; and gall-bladder disease (he famously displayed the scar from his cholecystectomy to the press).

John F. Kennedy. Burning during urination; back problems that required a brace and amphetamines; Addison's disease (atrophy of the adrenal glands); gastrointestinal problems that required him to take oral and intravenous cortisone, three diarrhea medicines (one of which contained opium), testosterone, and phenobarbital.

Dwight Eisenhower. Bowel obstruction; regional enteritis (Crohn's disease); heart attack; stroke; arthritis.

Sources: The Health of the Presidents, *by John R. Bumgarner; doctorzebra.com; Facts on File*

certain to increase as the European population ages and immigration continues. It is still too soon to speak, as the Egyptian-born scholar Bat Ye'or does, of "Eurabia." Nevertheless, profound demographic forces are shifting the balance of Europe in an Islamic direction. (For more on these trends see "A Muslim Europe?," on page 58.)

Moreover, those demographic forces may soon be given a political boost if Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union is successful. If Turkey were to join in, say, 2015, that country would be as important as Germany in terms of population: according to current projections, each would account for 14.5 percent of all EU citizens. Suddenly there would be more Muslims than Protestants in this new Europe.

Admittedly, some European politicians show signs of getting cold feet about Turkish accession. "That would be the end of the European Union," the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing famously declared in 2002. Other elder statesmen share his fears, among them the former German chancellors Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl.

But few European leaders dare say this kind of thing while they are in office. That is especially true in Germany, where party leaders are terrified of alienating the already large Turkish-German community. In any case, the majority of German voters seem to favor Turkish accession.

Unless demographic projections are wrong, the only way to avert a gradual Islamicization of Europe over the next few generations is to throw out Turkey's application for EU membership and stop further immigration from Islamic countries. Signs of support for such measures periodically manifest themselves, to be sure, but only at the level of national—as opposed to European—politics. Meanwhile, radical Islamists and their allies know that in a climate of appeasement intimidation is the best tactic; witness the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, whose recent work examined how women are treated under Islam. Criticizing Islam is at once politically incorrect and life-threatening.

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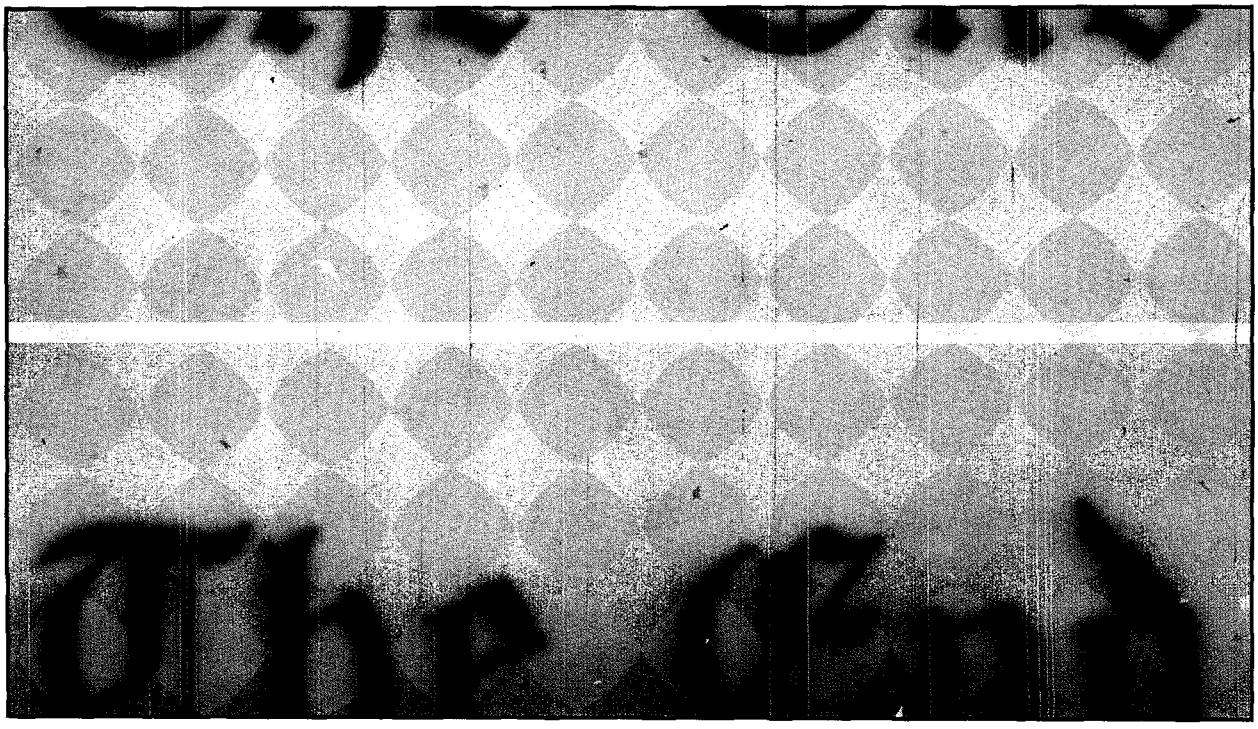

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So Europe is not only demographically vulnerable to Islamic penetration; it is also politically vulnerable. And perhaps even more important, Europe is *religiously* vulnerable too.

Here we come to the third reason why transatlantic rapprochement is so unlikely: the precipitous decline of European Christianity over the past three decades.

This headlong secularization is as big a story, in its way, as Europe's demographic decline. According to the Gallup International Millennium Survey of religious observance (conducted in 1999), 48 percent of people living in Western Europe almost never go to church; the figure for Eastern Europe is just a little lower, at 44 percent. In the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark fewer than 15 percent now attend church at least once a month. Only in Catholic Italy and Ireland do more than a third of the people worship monthly or more often.

European faith, too, as distinct from churchgoing, has waned quite dramatically in recent years. According to Gallup, 49 percent of Danes, 52 percent of Norwegians, and 55 percent of Swedes regard God as irrelevant to their lives. The proportion of Czechs who take this view is even higher. For whatever reason, Western Europeans living under Christian democracy or social democracy appear to have moved away from Christianity almost as rapidly as Eastern Europeans who used to live under "real existing socialism." In the words of the new Spanish prime minister, José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero, even traditionally Catholic Spaniards want "more sports, less religion."

What makes the de-Christianization of Europe so intriguing is that it cannot be explained by rising living standards; that theory collapses in the face of the contemporaneous vigor of Christianity in the United States. American religious observance is significantly higher than European; so is American religious faith. More than twice as big a percentage of Americans as Europeans attend religious services once a week or more. Some 62 percent of Americans believe in a personal God; little more than a third of Europeans do. Scarcely any Americans—compared with 15 percent of Europeans—can be characterized as atheists. Try to imagine George W. Bush calling for "more sports, less religion."

It is not so much, then, that militaristic Americans are from Mars and pacifistic Europeans from Venus. It would be more accurate to say that from an evangelical point of view, Americans are bound for heaven and Europeans for hell. At the very least, the rapid decline of European Christianity helps to explain why European conservatism has so little in common with the conservatism of the American right.

All this helps to explain, in turn, why in so many recent surveys Europeans have expressed a desire for a foreign policy less dependent on the United States. In the absence of the Soviet Union, in the presence of increasing numbers of Muslims, and in light of their own secularization, European societies feel more detached from the United States than at any other time since the 1930s.

In a recent Gallup poll 61 percent of Europeans said they thought the EU plays a positive role with regard to "peace in the world" (while just eight percent said its role was negative). But a remarkable 50 percent took the view that the United States now plays a negative role. Compare that with American attitudes: 59 percent of Americans regard the United States as making a positive contribution to world peace, and just 15 percent think the EU plays a negative role.

In the face of this kind of asymmetry it is well nigh impossible to turn back the clock to those halcyon days when there was just one West, indivisible. John Kerry would have tried, but he would have failed. George W. Bush has lower expectations of transatlantic relations. But he should not be blamed for their deterioration. His much exaggerated "unilateralism" is not why the Atlantic seems a little wider every day. It is Europe, not America, that is drifting away.

Niall Ferguson is a professor of history at Harvard University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, at Stanford. His most recent book is Colossus: The Price of America's Empire.

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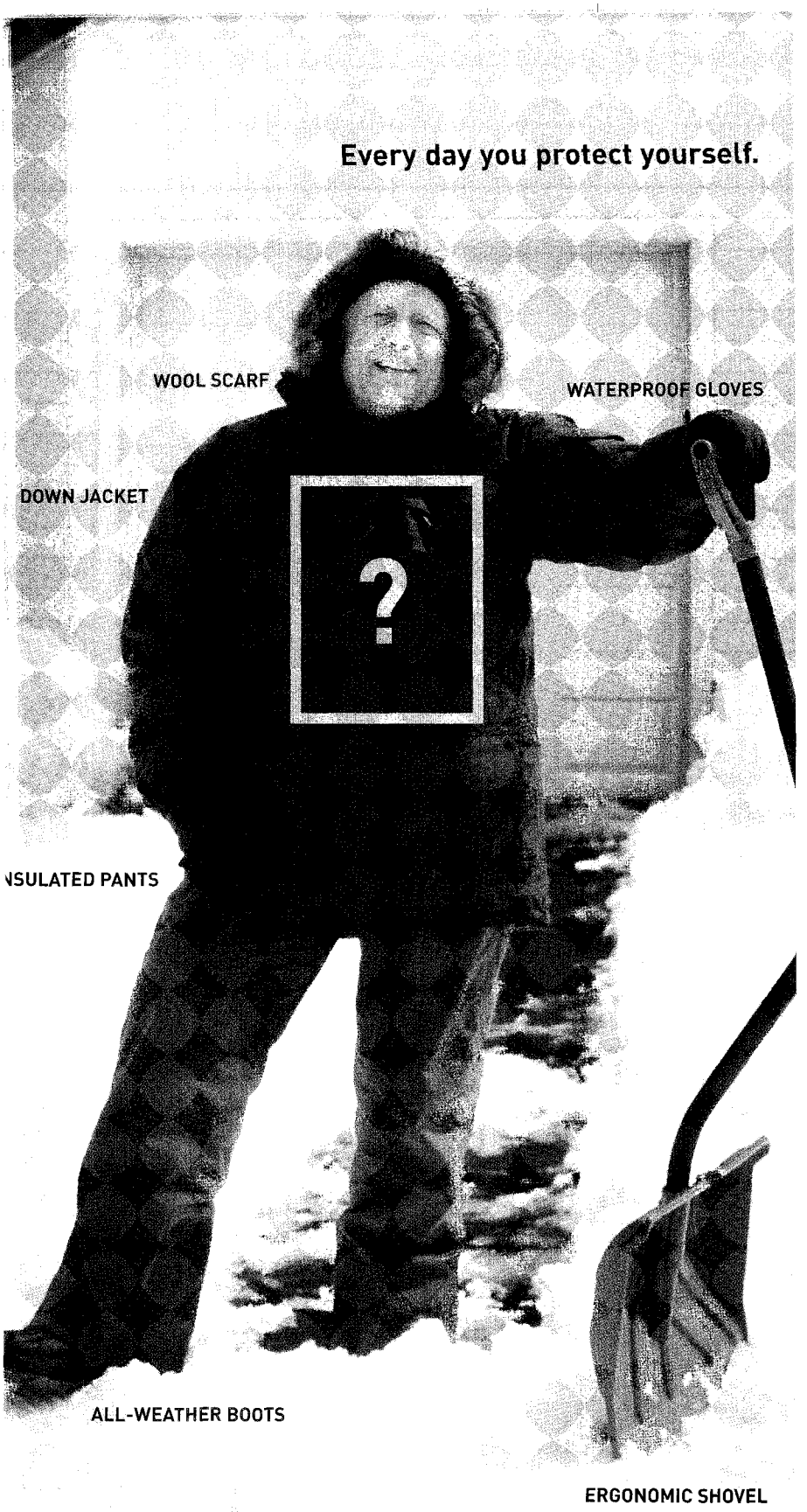

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Important considerations: ZOCOR is a prescription tablet and isn't right for everyone, including women who are nursing or pregnant or who may become pregnant, and anyone with liver problems. Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. ZOCOR may interact with other medicines or certain foods, increasing your risk of getting this serious side effect. So tell your doctor about any other medications you are taking.

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PLEASE READ THIS SUMMARY CAREFULLY, THEN ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT ZOCOR. NO ADVERTISEMENT CAN PROVIDE ALL THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO PRESCRIBE A DRUG. THIS ADVERTISEMENT DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF CAREFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR. ONLY YOUR DOCTOR HAS THE TRAINING TO WEIGH THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF A PRESCRIPTION DRUG FOR YOU.

USES OF ZOCOR

ZOCOR is a prescription drug that is indicated as an addition to diet for many patients with high cholesterol. For patients at high risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) because of existing heart disease, diabetes, vascular disease, or history of stroke, ZOCOR is indicated along with diet to reduce the risk of death by reducing coronary death; reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke; and reduce the need for revascularization procedures.

WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

***Muscle:* Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR. Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:**

- **Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, telithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.**
- **Gemfibrozil particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.**
- ***Other lipid lowering drugs (other fibrates or ≥1 g/day of niacin) that can cause myopathy when given alone.***
- **Danazol particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.**
- **Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.**

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

The dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily in patients receiving gemfibrozil. The combined use of ZOCOR and gemfibrozil should be avoided, unless your doctor determines that the benefits outweigh the increased risks of muscle problems. Caution should be used when using ZOCOR with other fibrates or niacin because these can cause muscle problems when taken alone.

No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine or danazol.

***The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be* avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.**

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of *some liver enzymes*. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and thereafter when clinically indicated. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months and periodically thereafter (eg, semiannually) for the first year of treatment. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR® (simvastatin). ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- Telithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by gemfibrozil and to a lesser extent other fibrates and niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥1 g/day).

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Danazol
- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations of or damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 10 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range. Of the 7 cases of myopathy/rhabdomyolysis among 10,269 patients on ZOCOR in another study, 4 were aged 65 or more (at baseline), 1 of whom was over 75.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In 2 large, 5-year studies, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.

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THE ART OF POLICY

Redheaded Eskimo

The corporate tax bill—an explanation

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

Something that confirms all fears and many conspiracy theories about government is finding out what our elected representatives would put into law if they could. Especially if they have an item of must-pass legislation trapped like a foie gras goose and are able to force-feed it with as many special-interest provisions as they like. The American Jobs Creation Act of 2004—an alteration of the U.S. tax code that Congress was required to make to bring the United States into compliance with World Trade Organization agreements—is such an item.

For more than thirty years Congress used various aspects of the tax code to subsidize American exports (tax breaks, tax loopholes, and tax credits being the modern way of handing out boodle and swag). This was very good for some American exporters and not very good for America. Congress's own Congressional Research Service notes that "the traditional economic analysis" is that export tax benefits "reduce overall U.S. economic welfare because at least part of the tax benefit is passed on to foreign consumers in the form of lower prices."

Foreigners should have been grateful. They weren't. The World Trade Organization ruled that U.S. tax legislation was in violation of WTO subsidy rules and gave the European Union permission to impose retaliatory tariffs. The EU began, last March, with a five percent penalty duty on selected American products, the levy to increase by one percentage point a month until America changed its laws. Targeted were leather goods, toys, sports equipment, appliances, and, especially, precious stones and jewelry. Perhaps the *jolies filles* of Brussels have become too fond of Lil' Kim–style bling. Congress had to act lest the watch-strap, Barbie, skateboard, George Foreman rotisserie, and cubic-zirconium sectors of the U.S. economy collapse in an election year.

Congressman Charles Rangel (D–NY) succinctly characterized the bill: "It stinks to high heaven." It passed 280 to 141 in the House and 69 to 17 in the Senate.

Title I of the American Jobs Creation Act repeals the export subsidies in question. But the legislation continues for another 626 pages.

American corporations get a one-year tax holiday during which they can repatriate all overseas profits at a tax rate of 5.25 percent instead of 35 percent as long as the money is used to create jobs. (CEO hiring of personal Pilates instructors counts!)

Moviemakers are rewarded with tax write-offs if, when seeking a location that looks like America, they seek it in America.

Builders of U.S. warships can defer taxes on their profits until the ships are complete. ("All done now, Secretary Rumsfeld, except for the tippy-top of the mast. We'll get to that first thing in 2054.")

Among many, many other hornswoggles is tax relief for NASCAR track owners, ceiling-fan importers, archery-equipment purveyors, and fishing-tackle-box manufacturers. Plus, "sonar devices suitable for finding fish" are "not treated as sport fishing equipment." Meaning, I guess, that they can be deducted as office equipment.

On Capitol Hill, legislation carefully tailored to the needs of a tiny constituency is sometimes called a "Redheaded Eskimo." He is in the Jobs Creation Act under "expenses paid by certain whaling captains in support of Native Alaskan subsistence whaling."

An earthier term can be used to describe the legislation. It, too, appears in the act. "Agricultural livestock waste nutrients" are covered by the "expansion of credit for electricity produced from certain renewable resources."

And, in an apparent payoff to the WTO for providing Congress with this wonderful lawmaking opportunity, there's "exclusion of income derived from certain wagers on horse races and dog races from gross income of nonresident alien individuals."

The only part of the Jobs Creation Act that attracted much public ire was the $10.14 billion tobacco-grower buyout. But the outcry was about the failure to put tobacco sales under the control of the Food and Drug Administration, so that the FDA could eliminate tobacco abuse the way it has eliminated the abuse of methamphetamines and OxyContin. (Next, the $100 billion McDonald's-franchise buyout to eliminate obesity.)

More deserving of reprobation was Congress's passing the bill off as "revenue neutral." This was accomplished mainly by making parts of it "temporary"—a tactic known in the nongovernmental world as lying.

The House-Senate Joint Committee on Taxation produced a sheaf of charts showing that the bill's $8.678 billion in costs from 2005 to 2009 will be balanced by the bill's $8.679 billion in savings from 2010 to 2014. By this logic a Friday-night drunk resulting in a hangover too severe to permit Saturday-afternoon mall shopping gives me revenue-neutral alcoholism.

If I were a congressman who had voted for the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, I'd claim it was forced on our country by a sinister international organization. I'd announce that the face-pierced anti-globalization window-busters and the gun nuts with skinny sideburns and New World Order paranoia were on to something. And if the voters in my district ever actually read the bill, I'd hope that one of those UN black helicopters would come get me, quick.

P. J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. *His most recent book is* Peace Kills.

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CROSS-EXAMINATION

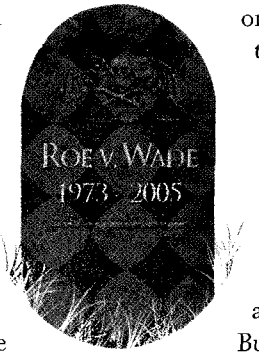
Letting Go of *Roe*

The Democratic Party's commitment to preserving Roe *v.* Wade *has been deeply unhealthy for the cause of abortion rights, for liberalism more generally, and ultimately for American democracy*

BY BENJAMIN WITTES

Are we about to suffer through another horrible Supreme Court nomination dominated by abortion politics?

Bet on it. With Chief Justice William Rehnquist seriously ill, the prospect of a Supreme Court vacancy early in George Bush's second term looms over American politics. The script for this—and every—Republican high-court nomination was written long ago. You already know how it goes: Both his own convictions and the need to keep his political base happy require a conservative president to nominate someone expected to vote to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 case that established the constitutional right of women to terminate their pregnancies. He has only two realistic choices. He can name someone openly hostile to *Roe*—and thereby trigger a major confrontation with liberal interest groups and Senate Democrats. Or he can name someone with no record on abortion rights but whose jurisprudential approach suggests a predictable skepticism toward them—in which case liberals will insist on trying to divine the nominee's views on the question, which he or she in turn will endeavor to conceal. Unless the president nominates someone the Democrats deem it not in their interests to oppose, the nomination process will become an ugly spectacle in which a single narrow issue pushes to the sidelines discussion of the broad array of other important legal questions the Supreme Court handles. And that process will cast abortion-rights supporters as intolerant of those who disagree with them—or even those they fear may disagree with them.



What's the alternative?

Liberal abortion-rights supporters could chill out.

Do you mean surrender and let *Roe* die?

That's exactly what I mean. It wouldn't necessarily come to that, of course. Republicans have put seven of the nine current justices on the Supreme Court—and they still have only one more anti-abortion vote than they had in 1973, when the decision came down 7 to 2. Where reproductive rights are concerned, the bark of a conservative nominee is frequently worse than his bite—as three justices nominated by Ronald Reagan or George H.W. Bush proved in 1992, when, in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, they voted that "the essential holding of *Roe* v. *Wade* should be retained and once again reaffirmed."

Still, if *Roe* ever does die, I won't attend its funeral. Nor would I lift a finger to prevent a conservative president from nominating justices who might bury it once and for all.

Are you a pro-lifer?

Not at all. I generally favor permissive abortion laws. And despite my lack of enthusiasm for *Roe*, I wouldn't favor overturning the decision as a jurisprudential matter. A generation of women has grown up thinking of reproductive freedom as a constitutional right, and the Court should not casually take away rights that it has determined the Constitution guarantees. Stability in law—particularly constitutional law—is critically important; the Supreme Court would do well to remember that. Still, the liberal commitment to *Roe* has been deeply unhealthy—for American democracy, for liberalism, and even for the cause of abortion rights itself. All would benefit if abortion-rights proponents were forced to make their arguments in the policy arena (rather than during Supreme Court nomination hearings), and if pro-lifers were actually accountable to the electorate for their deeply unpopular policy prescriptions.

That's absurd. How can you say that liberalism and abortion rights would benefit if their supporters gave up on the decision that protects reproductive freedom?

By removing the issue from the policy arena, the Supreme Court has prevented abortion-rights supporters from winning a debate in which public opinion favors them.

Since its inception *Roe* has had a deep legitimacy problem, stemming from its weakness as a legal opinion. Conservatives who fulminate that the Court made up the right to abortion, which appears explicitly nowhere in the Constitution, are being simplistic—but they're not entirely wrong. In the years since the decision an enormous body of academic literature has tried to put the right to an abortion on firmer legal ground. But thousands of pages of scholarship notwithstanding, the right to abortion remains constitutionally shaky; abortion policy is a question that the Constitution—even broadly construed—cannot convincingly be read to resolve.

Consequently, a pro-lifer who complains that she never got her democratic say before abortion was legalized nationwide has a powerful grievance. And there's nothing quite like denying people a say in policy to energize their commitment to a position. This point is not limited to abortion. For instance, the host of gay-marriage ballot initiatives in November came in direct response to the decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court to treat same-sex unions as a judicial matter rather than a legislative one. And less than a year before the Court handed down *Roe*, it single-handedly reinvigorated a public commitment to capital

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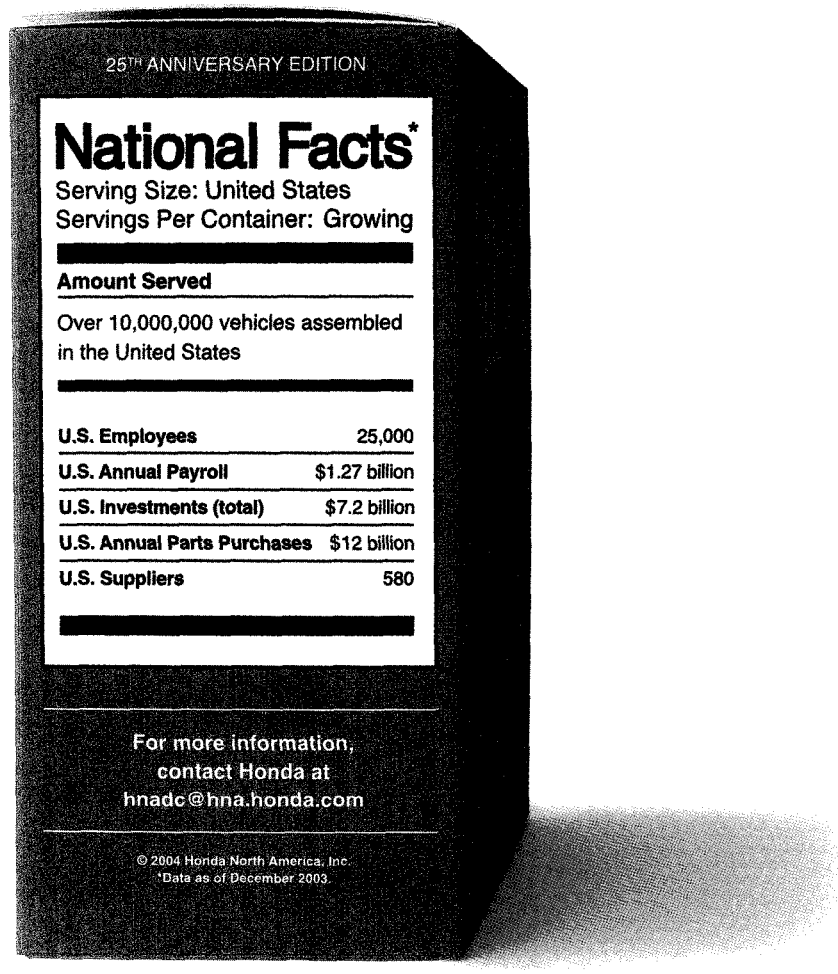

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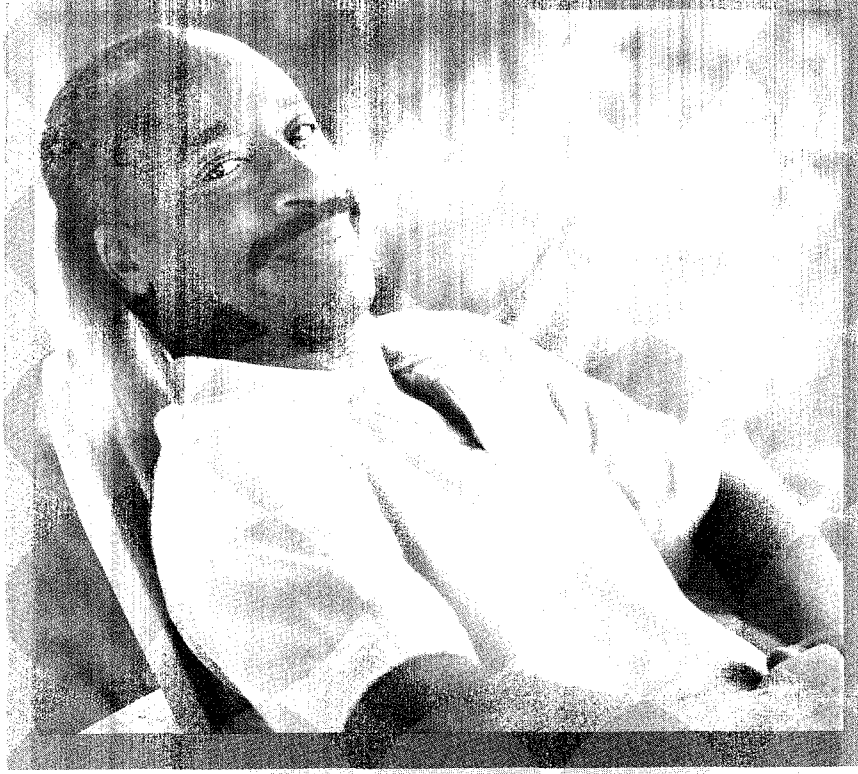

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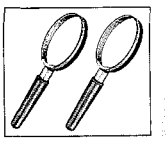

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punishment (which at that point was on the way out) by striking down the death penalty as then practiced; within several years states had rewritten their laws, the Court had backed down, and executions had skyrocketed to levels unseen in decades.

But the Court has not backed down on abortion. Thus the pro-life sense of disenfranchisement has been irremediable—making it all the more potent. One effect of *Roe* was to mobilize a permanent constituency for criminalizing abortion—a constituency that has driven much of the southern realignment toward conservatism. So although *Roe* created the right to choose, that right exists under perpetual threat of obliteration, and depends for its vitality on the composition of the Supreme Court at any given moment.

Meanwhile, *Roe* gives pro-life politicians a free pass. A large majority of voters reject the hard-line anti-abortion stance: in Gallup polling since 1975, for example, about 80 percent of respondents have consistently favored either legal abortion in all circumstances (21 to 34 percent) or legal abortion under some circumstances (48 to 61 percent). Although a plurality of Americans appear to favor abortion rights substantially more limited than what *Roe* guarantees, significantly more voters describe themselves as "pro-choice" than "pro-life." Yet because the Court has removed the abortion question from the legislative realm, conservative politicians are free to cater to pro-lifers by proposing policies that, if ever actually implemented, would render those politicians quite unpopular.

In short, *Roe* puts liberals in the position of defending a lousy opinion that disenfranchised millions of conservatives on an issue about which they care deeply while freeing those conservatives from any obligation to articulate a responsible policy that might command majority support.

But if the Court overturns *Roe*, won't we go back to the bad old days of back-alley abortions?

I doubt it. The day the Court overturns *Roe*, abortion will suddenly

THE LIST

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Which king was the great-grandfather of France's Louis XV? When Ken Jennings, a thirty-year-old software engineer from Salt Lake City, provided the correct answer (Louis XIV), on November 3, he locked down his sixty-sixth consecutive win on *Jeopardy* and became the biggest money-winner in television game-show history. By the time he finally lost—in an episode that aired on November 30—Jennings had amassed $2.52 million, given more than 2,700 correct responses, and defeated 148 challengers over 75 episodes of the show. Jennings's winnings surpassed those of the previous record holder, Kevin Olmstead, an environmental engineer from Michigan, who racked up $2.18 million on ABC's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* in the spring of 2001. Here are eight other notable masters of miscellany from over the past half century, ranked in order of their winnings (in 2004 dollars). —*MICHAEL SLENSKE*

1. Curtis Warren (1999–2000): This air-traffic controller won $1.41 million on two episodes of Fox's *Greed*. His successful earlier appearances on *Sale of the Century* and *Win Ben Stein's Money* gave him total game-show winnings of $1,546,988 (inflation-adjusted: $1,658,990). The million-dollar question on *Greed* required him to identify four television series that had been made into movies. His answer: *McHale's Navy*, *Dragnet*, *The Flintstones*, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

2. Robert Strom (1957): The eleven-year-old math wizard from P.S. 26 in the Bronx won $192,000 on *The $64,000 Question*, and won another $32,000 on *The $64,000 Challenge*, thereby collecting $224,000 (inflation-adjusted: $1,211,392) before hitting puberty.

3. Elfrida von Nardroff (1958): Von Nardroff, a graduate student in sociology at Columbia, became the biggest winner in the history of *Twenty-One*, collecting $220,500 (inflation-adjusted: $1,157,427) over a sixteen-week run.

4. Charles Van Doren (1956–1957): During fourteen weeks on *Twenty-One* the Columbia English professor earned $129,000 (inflation-adjusted: $697,632) before tarnishing his family's literary legacy by admitting in a congressional hearing to having received answers in advance. Losing game-show question: Name the kings of Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and Iraq. Answer: King Haakon, King Gustavus, King Baudouin, and King Faisal. Van Doren missed King Baudouin. (His losing answer to Congress: "I was like a child who refuses to admit a fact in the hope that it will go away.")

5. Thom McKee (1980): This naval pilot lasted longer—nine weeks—than any other player in the history of *Tic Tac Dough*, winning $312,700 (inflation-adjusted: $631,529)—$200,000 in cash, three sailboats, eight cars, and sixteen vacation trips—by defeating forty-three opponents. Losing question: What leading actress appeared in both *The Wind and the Lion* and *Starting Over?* Answer: Candice Bergen.

6. Michael Jezierny (2000): Jezierny, a sixth-grader, bested forty-nine other precocious children to win a $300,000 trust fund on Fox's *Challenge of the Child Geniuses*. Winning question: What did the Romans call the country now known as France? Answer: Gaul.

7. Herbert Stempel (1956): As Robert Redford dramatized in his 1994 film *Quiz Show*, Stempel, a twenty-nine-year-old Army veteran attending the City College of New York on the GI Bill, bagged $49,500 (inflation-adjusted: $277,779) before losing on purpose to Van Doren. Losing question: What movie won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1955? Answer: *Marty*.

8. Tom Walsh (2004): Before Ken Jennings began trouncing everyone, this former senior policy adviser to the Senate Finance Committee held the record for most wins on *Jeopardy*, amassing $184,900 over the course of seven victories. His losing answer: This country's coastline, on the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, is the longest on the African continent. Correct response: What is Somalia? (Walsh said "Ethiopia.")

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THE ODDS

WHICH HARRY POTTER CHARACTER GETS WHACKED?

The new year brings the promise of a new best seller, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, due to arrive on bookshelves soon. Along with Muggles and magic, this installment features a morbid resolution: Harry's creator, J. K. Rowling, kills off another character. The Internet is abuzz with Potter fans' worried speculation about who will be sent to that great Sorting Hat in the sky. One suspects, though, that for weary parents of those rosy-cheeked millions who demand the latest book or movie and the Potter-themed underwear available on eBay, this plot twist is not entirely unwelcome. Perhaps it is they who are flocking, as if spellbound, to the British betting site BlueSquare.com, which is offering odds on who will die. So where should your Galleon gold go? Early action favored Hagrid, Harry's bushy-bearded half-giant pal, though Harry's love interest, Cho Chang, is also the object of heavy betting. Here is the latest action on which Harry Potter character will die. —*JOHN SELLERS*

6:4 Rubeus Hagrid. Has Rowling simply run out of alliterative exclamations for this loyal brute, who spews nonsense like "Gallopin' Gorgons!" and "Gulpin' gargoyles!"?

2:1 Professor Albus Dumbledore. Old-as-the-hills flowing-robed Hogwarts headmaster might die of natural causes. Possible last words: "I was just a Gandalf wannabe!"

2:1 Professor Minerva McGonagall. Severe-looking assistant headmistress is an all-around bummer.

3:1 Cho Chang. Hogwarts hottie could be a target for bad vibes owing to Harry's recent moony-eyed lust for her. Is there such a thing as a restraining-order spell?

4:1 Fred/George Weasley. The prankery of the incorrigible redheaded twins could get the better of them when they accidentally morph Harry's tapioca into a hungry basilisk.

5:1 Ron Weasley. Harry's gangly sidekick could be pecked to death by his over-enthusiastic pet owl, Pigwidgeon.

5:1 Hermione Granger. Buck-toothed know-it-all might finally be due for her comeuppance.

5:1 Ginny Weasley. A nice Deletrius spell on Ron's little sister, too minor for anyone to miss if she died, would thin the Weasleys' roachlike brood.

5:1 Professor Severus Snape. If the hooked-nose potions master, who detests Harry Potter, gets offed, there goes the only enjoyable part of the films: Alan Rickman.

5:1 Molly Weasley. Like the death of Bambi's mother, the Weasley matriarch's demise would cause searing emotional scars. Great for young readers!

6:1 Neville Longbottom. Loser of pet toads, sniffler, and klutz extraordinaire, Harry's Gryffindor classmate could be done in by his own sad Neville-ness.

10:1 Dobby. Like Scrappy-Doo and Jar Jar Binks before him, this annoying elfin meddler deserves the slow, horrible death owed to such characters everywhere.

12:1 Oliver Wood. Odds are long on Harry's former Quidditch pal because he's as interesting as a plateful of boiled ham.

14:1 Draco Malfoy. Who will readers love to hate if Harry's scowling albino nemesis kicks it?

16:1 Harry Potter. Admit it, parents, it's your dream scenario: finally realizing his horrible taste in eyewear and scarves, Harry turns his wand on himself and says, "Reducto!"

become a voting issue for millions of pro-choice voters who care about it but know today that the right is protected not by congressional politics but by the courts. At the same time, thousands of conservative politicians will face a dreadful choice: backtrack from the anti-abortion ground they have staked out and risk infuriating their pro-life base; or deliver on their promise to eliminate the right to abortion, and risk the wrath of a moderate, pro-choice majority. In the short term some states might pass highly restrictive abortion laws, or even outright bans—but the backlash could be devastating for conservatism. Liberals should be salivating at their electoral prospects in a post-*Roe* world. The simple fact is that a majority of Americans want abortion legal at least some of the time, and the majority in a democracy tends to get what it wants on issues about which it cares strongly. In the absence of *Roe* abortion rights would probably be protected by the laws of most states relatively quickly.

Sure, certain state legislatures will impose restrictions that would be impermissible under the Supreme Court's current doctrine; some women might have to travel to another state to get abortions. But the right to abortion would most likely enjoy a measure of security it does not now have. Legislative compromises tend to be durable, since they bring a sense of resolution to divisive issues by balancing competing interests; mustering a working majority to upset them can be far more difficult than rallying discontent against the edicts of unelected judges. In short, overturning *Roe* would lead to greater regional variability in the right to abortion, but this would be a worthwhile price for pro-choice voters to pay in exchange for greater democratic legitimacy for that right and, therefore, greater acceptance of and permanence for it.

Hang on a second. This is a constitutional right at stake. You don't argue that blacks should place their civil rights at the mercy of the majority. Why should women? Isn't fighting for fundamental rights a matter of principle?

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Indeed it would be, if the right to abortion—like minority civil and voting rights—were unambiguously protected by the Constitution. But let's be frank: it isn't. The right to abortion remains a highly debatable proposition, both jurisprudentially and morally. The mere fact that liberals have to devote so much political energy to pretending that the right exists beyond democratic debate proves that it doesn't.

Lots of fundamental rights are protected by legal authorities other than the Constitution. For instance, the right not to be fired by a private employer because of one's race or religion is statutory, not constitutional. The right to abortion is in no way degraded by the fact that state laws may prove the best means of guaranteeing it. That simply reflects the absence of a national consensus about whether the right exists and, if so, what its limits should be.

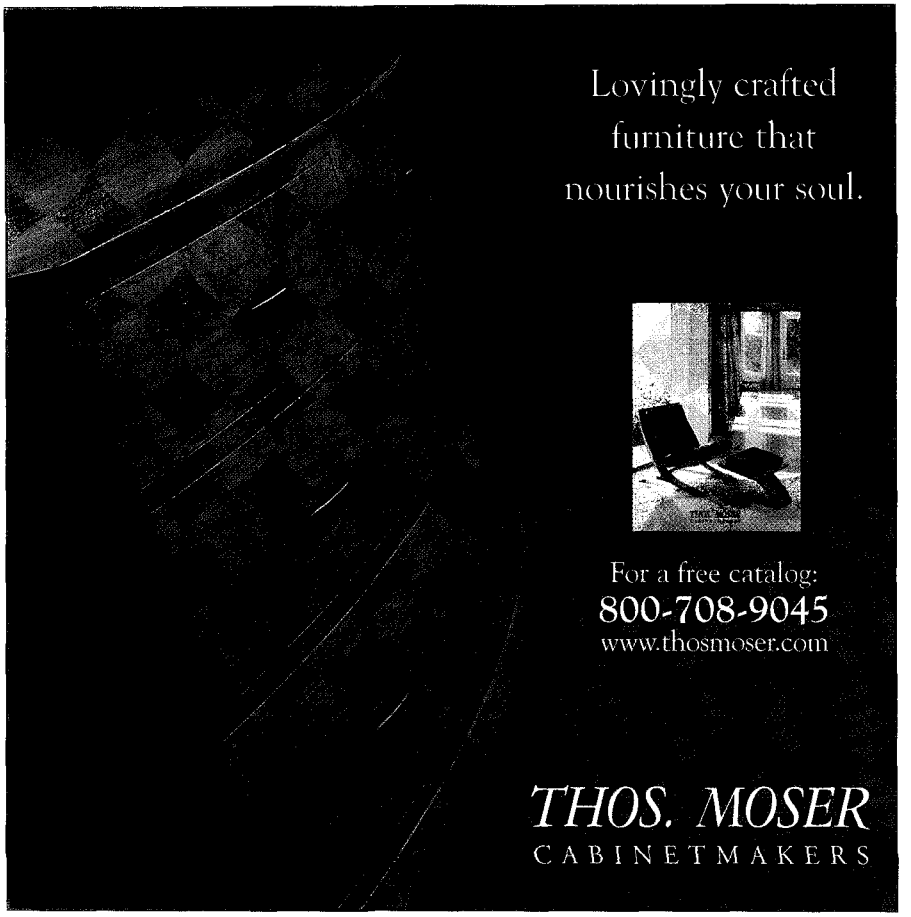
This is an easy argument for a man to make. But could you be so blithe if you were a woman, and abortion rights were more than an abstraction?

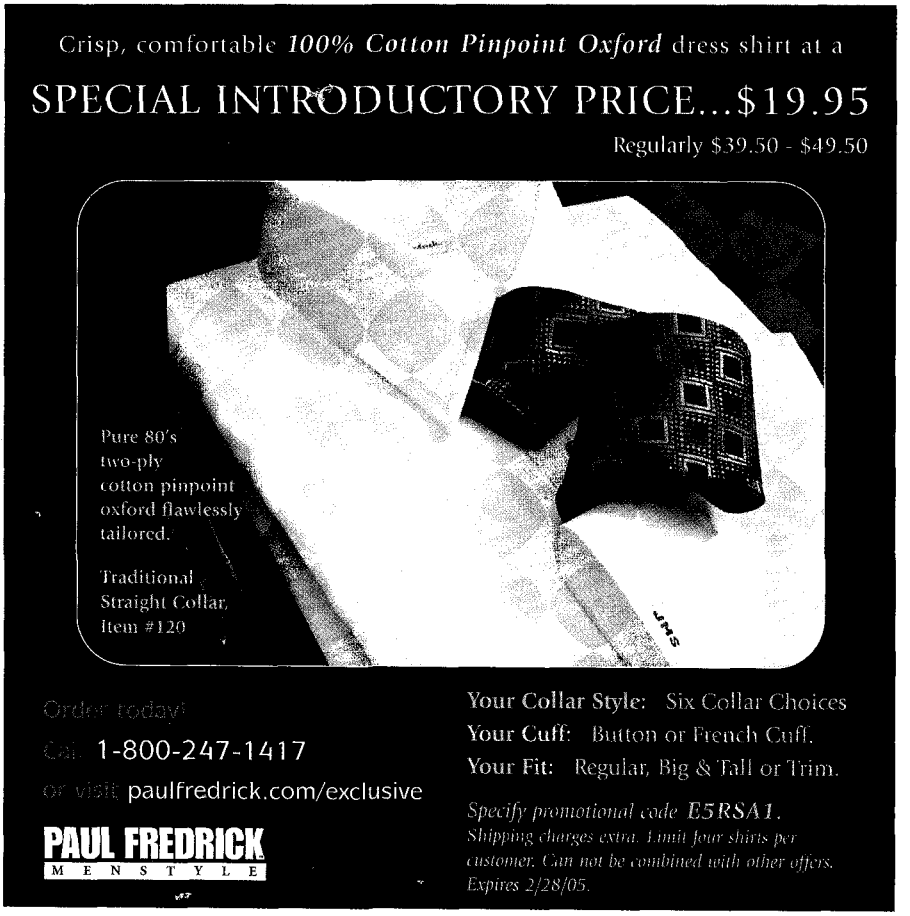
I have no idea what losing my Y chromosome would do to my attitude toward this subject. But the costs of defending *Roe* have grown too high, and I'm just not willing to pay them anymore.

Do you seriously think that pro-choice liberals could ever come around to your view?

Self-confident liberals already would have. A liberal fear of democratic dialogue may make sense regarding social issues on which the majority is conservative. But it is a special kind of pathology that would rather demand a loyalty oath to a weak and unstable Court decision than make a case before one's fellow citizens on a proposition that already commands majority support. The insistence on judicial protection from a political fight that liberals have every reason to expect to win advertises pointedly how little they still believe in their ability to persuade.

Benjamin Wittes is an editorial writer at The Washington Post *and the author of* Starr: A Reassessment *(2002). The views expressed here are his own.*





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Primary Sources

How car insurance causes death; the Brits and foreplay; how long could you survive without the Internet?

THE NATION

The Nuclear Option

Nearly everyone agrees that reducing U.S. dependence on foreign sources of energy is a good idea. But—the enthusiasm of technogeeks notwithstanding—producing hydrogen-powered cars may not be the best way to achieve that, according to a new study by two English researchers. Although replacing gas-powered U.S. automobiles with hydrogen-powered ones might slow global warming, generating the necessary hydrogen would require building either a million new wind turbines (enough to cover half of California) or a thousand additional nuclear-power plants. Neither approach is at all likely, but a recent analysis of Japan's energy-security policy suggests that maybe the United States should take a hard look at the nuclear option. According to a report published by the Baker Institute for Public Policy, at Rice University, 77 percent of Japan's energy needs were met by oil in 1973, when OPEC turned off the oil spigot and caused an energy crisis. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, the Japanese government worked rapidly to expand the country's nuclear capacity (it also developed programs aimed at substituting natural gas and coal for oil). The effort worked: by 2002 only 52 percent of Japan's energy came from oil—and whereas oil consumption in neighboring China and South Korea has more than doubled since the late 1980s, Japan's has been relatively stable. In the event of another oil crunch, Japan's investment in nuclear energy is likely to pay significant dividends. According to the Baker Institute's model, if the price of oil rose by 25 percent, Japan's nuclear capacity would save roughly $20 billion in GDP.

—"The Arithmetic of Renewable Energy," Andrew Oswald and Jim Oswald, *Accountancy*; "The Role of Nuclear Power in Enhancing Japan's Energy Security," James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University

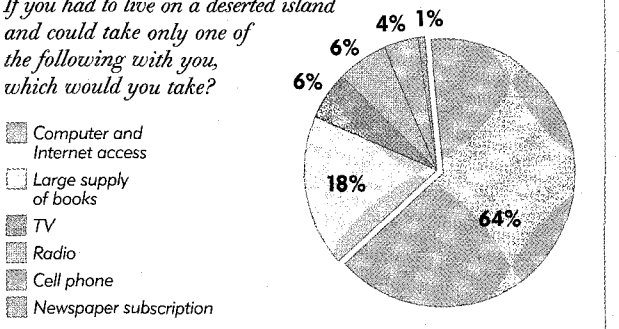
"Moral Hazard" on the Road

To the roll of highway perils—drunks, cell phones, teenagers—can be added one more: the insured. A new study suggests that requiring insurance coverage may lead drivers to take a cavalier attitude toward road safety. Economists from Columbia University and Harvard Law School's Olin Center for Law, Economics, and Business examined the effects of the compulsory-insurance laws and no-fault insurance systems that were gradually adopted in the United States from 1970 to 1998. (Under no-fault systems each driver's insurance pays for the damages that he or she inflicts, though all states give drivers some exposure to lawsuits for negligence. Under older, fault-based systems, the at-fault driver pays *all* the damages.) Forty-five states now have compulsory insurance, and fourteen have no-fault systems. The researchers found that relaxation of liability is correlated with a 10 percent increase in traffic deaths (or about 4,000 dead travelers a year). Uninsured drivers tend to drive more carefully (after all, they themselves have to pay for accidents): for every one percent decrease in the number of uninsured drivers, the number of fatalities increases by two percent. Despite the "moral hazard" posed by insurance, the authors concede that compulsory and no-fault systems aren't all bad: though more people may die, the victims' families are far better remunerated than in the past.

—"The Effect of Automobile Insurance and Accident Liability Laws on Traffic Fatalities," Alma Cohen and Rajeev Dehejia, *Journal of Law and Economics*

GILLIGAN'S ISLAND.COM

If you had to live on a deserted island and could take only one of the following with you, which would you take?



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SOCIETY

Addicted to DSL

What happens when Internet users are taken offline? To find out, Yahoo and the media agency OMD commissioned a cruel study: a group of Internet users were unhooked for a two-week period and asked to record in diaries what they did and how they felt. The diary entries were almost uniformly miserable: the subjects discovered—doubtless to Yahoo's delight—that the Internet was more deeply embedded in their daily lives than they had realized. Activities such as checking box scores, e-mailing friends, booking travel, paying bills, and shopping were profoundly disrupted. Across the board, participants reported withdrawal-like feelings of loss, frustration, and disconnectedness after the plug was pulled. (The temptation to go online was so great that the participants were offered "life lines"—one-time, one-task forays onto the Web—to ease their pain.) A related survey of 1,000 online households supported the study's findings: 48 percent of respondents said they could not go without Web access for more than two weeks, and 64 percent said the Internet would be their first choice of medium if they had to live on a deserted island. As for how much one would have to be paid to give up the Internet for fourteen long days, the answers averaged $152. But this price may be something of an underestimate, since the researchers had a difficult time attracting guinea pigs for their Internet-deprivation experiment—they had to approach around 750 people just to get twenty-eight willing subjects—despite offering to pay participants $950.

—"Disconnected: Life Without the Internet," Yahoo and OMD

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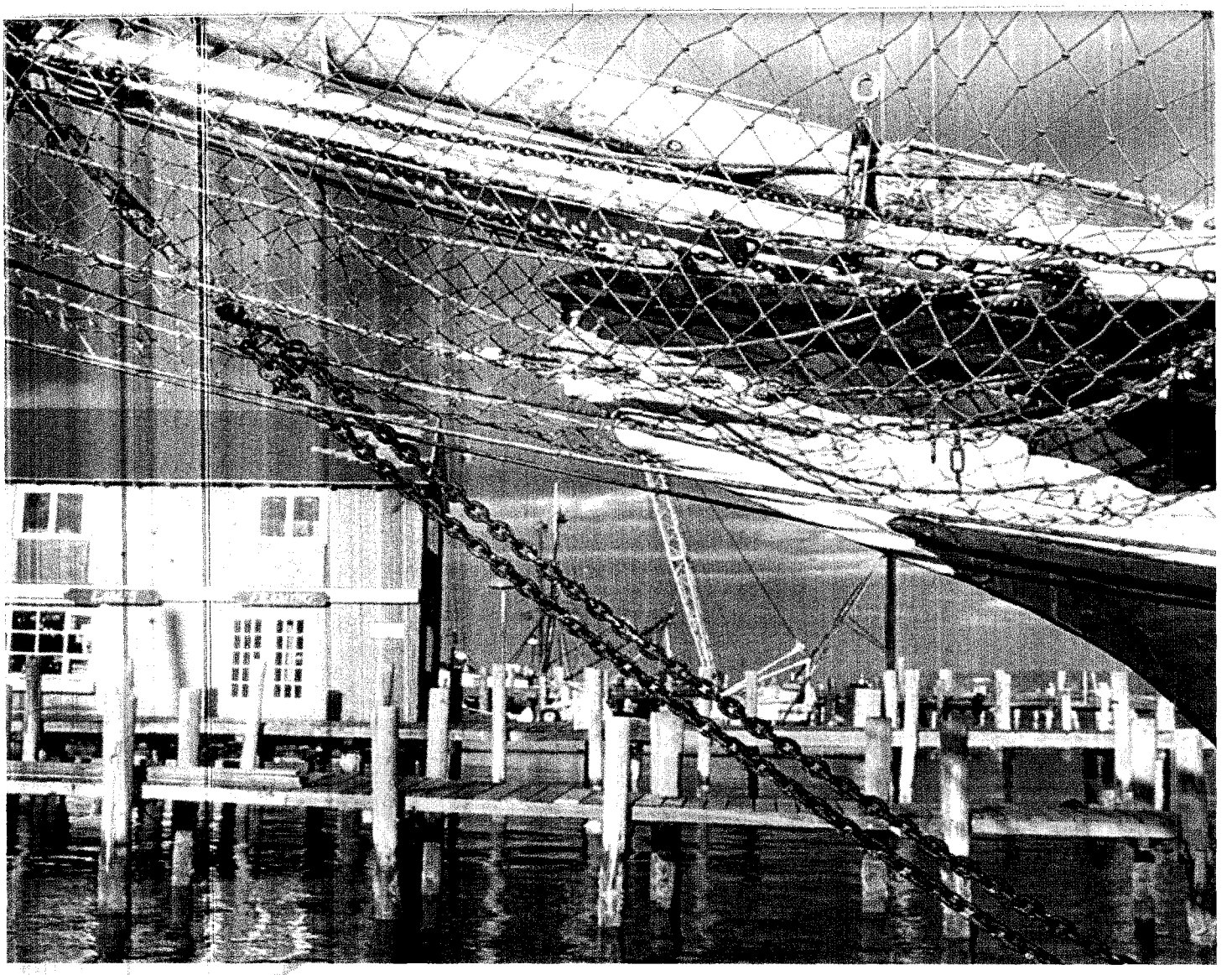

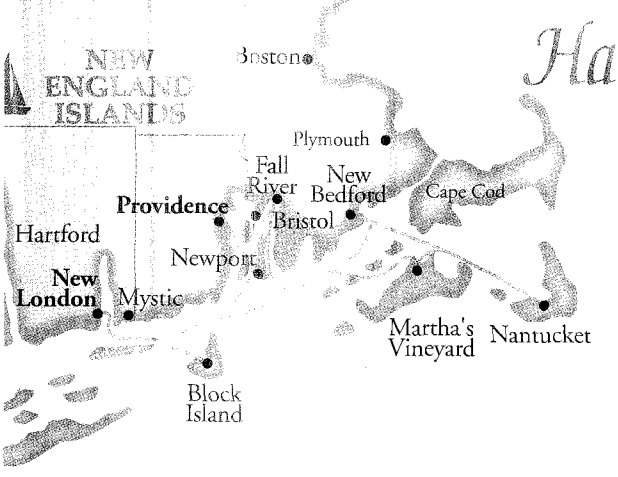

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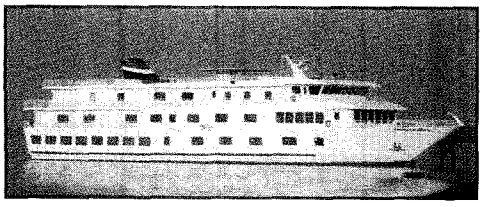

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Late Night for Smart People

With vulgar fare such as *The Man Show*, *South Park*, and *Reno 911!*, the cable network Comedy Central has earned a reputation for pandering to the Rabelaisian tastes of slackers, stoners, and frat boys. But is that reputation deserved? The Annenberg Public Policy Center set out to answer this question by comparing viewers of Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* with those of David Letterman's and Jay Leno's (relatively) staid offerings. The findings are surprising. To be sure, Stewart's viewers are much younger and much more heavily male than his late-night competitors'. But they are also wealthier and better educated: 30 percent have annual household incomes above $75,000, compared with only 25 percent of Letterman's and Leno's viewers. Some 39 percent of *The Daily Show*'s viewers have college degrees, compared with only 29 percent of Letterman's and 27 percent of Leno's. In a perhaps not unrelated finding Annenberg discovered that Stewart's audience is also more politically aware: 46 percent of *Daily Show* watchers follow politics "most of the time," versus 38 percent of Letterman watchers and 39 percent of Leno watchers. And when the researchers asked respondents six questions about contemporary politics, Stewart viewers on average answered 60 percent of them correctly; Leno and Letterman viewers on average answered only 49 percent correctly.

—"National Annenberg Election Survey 2004," Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania

The Fodor's Guide to Sex

We always suspected that the French were having the most sex, but now we have pseudo-scientific proof, thanks to an online study conducted by the renowned statisticians at the Durex condom company. But it's the British—to everyone's astonishment—who seem to be the world's most attentive lovers. Other key findings: the Chinese have the most partners, the Italians the most orgasms, and chilly Iceland the highest vibrator usage.

—"2004 Global Sex Survey," Durex

FREQUENCY OF SEX *(number of times a year)*:		TIME SPENT IN FOREPLAY *(in minutes)*:	
FRANCE	137	FRANCE	19.2
GREECE	133	GREECE	20
HUNGARY	131	HUNGARY	20.4
BULGARIA	128	BULGARIA	21
CZECH REPUBLIC	125	CZECH REPUBLIC	18.3
UNITED KINGDOM	119	UNITED KINGDOM	22.5
ICELAND	119	ICELAND	19.8
NEW ZEALAND	114	NEW ZEALAND	19.4
USA	111	USA	19.7
ISRAEL	111	ISRAEL	19.5
SPAIN	110	SPAIN	21.7
ITALY	108	ITALY	20.1
IRELAND	105	IRELAND	21.8
(AVERAGE)	103	(AVERAGE)	19.7
THAILAND	103	THAILAND	11.5
DENMARK	101	DENMARK	18
GERMANY	98	GERMANY	22.2
BRAZIL	96	BRAZIL	19.6
SWEDEN	94	SWEDEN	19.8
CHINA	90	CHINA	20.1
INDIA	82	INDIA	19.3
HONG KONG	79	HONG KONG	14.2
JAPAN	46	JAPAN	19.5

THE ECONOMY

The Costs of Doing Business

You might think that in a Third World country the most significant bar to opening, say, a successful grocery store would be the risk of revolutionary violence, or maybe the crippling poverty of your client base. True enough, according to a World Bank report—but the economic misery of many poor countries would be somewhat alleviated by clearing away the vast thicket of red tape that holds back their would-be businessmen. In Albania, for instance, it takes about forty-seven days—nearly twice the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average—to register and launch a new business. (In the United States it takes about five days.) And the Albanian bureaucracy is speedy compared with those of Belarus (79 days), Angola (146 days), and Haiti, where it takes an average of 203 days to make one's way through a corrupt system. Meanwhile, opening a business in Bangladesh requires forking over 90 percent of what a Bangladeshi earns, on average, in a year; in Burkina Faso it takes 150 percent of per capita gross national income to get started, in Chad more than 300 percent. And once a business has managed to open, the regulatory burdens that poor countries have in place still make it difficult to get credit, register property, or hire and fire employees. Overall, the report says, the benefits of slashing red tape would be enormous: if the world's poor countries had regulatory structures as efficient as those of the top quartile of nations, their economic growth rate could average two percentage points higher.

—"Doing Business in 2005: Removing Obstacles to Growth," The World Bank

The Wal-Mart Effect

Can a single retail company affect inflation? A recent National Bureau of Economic Research study argues that Wal-Mart's size and lower-than-average prices have pushed the U.S. inflation rate substantially below what official statistics indicate. According to the study's authors, the government's current inflation metric assumes that lower prices at big-box discounters mean products of lower quality. But as the authors point out, the food products available at Wal-Mart tend to be exactly the same as those at local supermarkets, so customers don't sacrifice quality by taking their business to the big discounter. When the authors corrected for Wal-Mart's impact on the cost of food around the country, they found that from 1998 to 2001 the government had overstated increases in food prices by 14 to 18.3 percent—meaning, in turn, that the Bureau of Labor Statistics had overstated nationwide inflation by about 15 percent a year.

—"CPI Bias From Supercenters: Does the BLS Know That Wal-Mart Exists?" Jerry Hausman, Ephraim Leibtag, NBER

Compiled by Ross Douthat, Nathan Littlefield, Marshall Poe, and Matthew Quirk. For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200501/primarysources

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THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

A Muslim Europe?

In the short term the EU must assimilate its small but restive Muslim populations—and in the long term it may have an Islamic majority

From the ban on headscarves in French schools to the debate over Turkish membership in the EU, European political controversies increasingly reflect fears of Islam. Some observers have even speculated that Europe will one day soon have a Muslim majority—by the end of the twenty-first century "at the very latest," the widely renowned scholar Bernard Lewis, an emeritus professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton, casually told a German newspaper last July.

At first blush such anxiety seems unwarranted. There are 15.2 million Muslims in the fifteen countries that joined the EU before 2004—only about four percent of the total population there. And that percentage is smaller still when the Eastern European countries that joined the EU last year are factored in. Even the addition of Turkey's 68 million Muslims would bring the total to only 15 percent of Europe's overall population.

But a number of factors are converging to swell the Muslim presence in what was once Christianity's heartland. Birth rates have fallen well below replacement levels in a number of European countries, and there is little expectation that this trend will reverse itself. The latest UN projections see Europe's overall population dropping from about 728 million in 2000 to roughly 630 million in 2050.

The Continent's Muslim population, however, represents a stark exception to this trend. Europe's Muslims are considerably younger than its non-Muslims, and their overall birth rate is roughly three times as high. Small wonder that by 2015, when Europe's population will have fallen by roughly 3.5 percent from the present level, the Muslim population is expected to have doubled—and that's assuming no significant increase in the conversion rate on a continent where Christianity's decline in recent decades has left an unprecedented religious vacuum.

In addition, about 900,000 immigrants reach European shores each year—and Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa make up an increasing proportion of these new arrivals. So far this influx has been driven largely by conditions in the Muslim world, but it is likely to be amplified by a demand for immigrant workers in European nations in the decades ahead, as the graying of Europe's population puts an increasing strain on its welfare-state economy. According to a 2000 UN projection, the EU states would need 949,000 immigrants a year to maintain their 1995 population, 1,588,000 a year to maintain their 1995 working-age population, and a stunning 13,480,000 a year to maintain the 1995 ratio of working-age to retired residents.

Relying too heavily on demographic projections can be a fool's game, of course; recall that the feared "population bomb" of the 1970s never detonated. But integrating even existing Muslim minorities already poses a serious cultural and political challenge for European society. The relatively small size of the Islamic population is counterbalanced by its concentration in a few Western European nations—particularly France, Germany, and the Low Countries—and by the tendency of Muslim immigrants to cluster around large cities (two fifths of Britain's Muslims live in greater London, and a third of France's Muslims in the Paris area), often in neighborhoods and vast housing projects that are culturally and economically isolated from the wider society.

The inhabitants of these Muslim ghettos are vulnerable to the woes that usually afflict marginalized populations: high crime rates, poor education, rampant unemployment. And this, in turn, may make them receptive to the lure of radical Islam. Only a small minority of European Muslims are hard-core Islamists. But the radical strain in what Olivier Roy, of the French National Center for Scientific Research, calls "EuroIslam" is potent enough to make Europe both an ideal training and staging ground for terrorism (since 9/11 European authorities have reportedly arrested roughly twenty times as many terror suspects as the United States has) and a target of opportunity for would-be *jihadis* (as in last spring's Madrid bombings). Unsurprisingly, these factors also tend to spur anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant backlash—exemplified by the high vote total earned by Jean-Marie Le Pen's quasi-fascist National Front in France's most recent presidential election.

Experts disagree about how difficult it will be to integrate the growing Muslim population. In 2002, for instance, Peter Mandaville, the author of *Transnational Muslim Politics* (2001), argued, "Despite the presence of radi-

WHERE THEY COME FROM
Predominant homelands of Muslim immigrants in various European countries

Austria	Turkey (50%)
Belgium	Morocco (55%)
Denmark	Turkey (27%)
Finland	Somalia (23%)
France	Algeria (30%)
Germany	Turkey (68%)
Greece	Turkey (50%)
Italy	Morocco (34%)
Luxembourg	Montenegro (25%)
Netherlands	Turkey (40%)
Portugal	Mozambique (N/A)
Spain	Morocco (N/A)
Sweden	Fmr. Yugoslavia (25%)
UK	Pakistan (45%)

SOURCE: TIMOTHY M. SAVAGE, "EUROPE AND ISLAM: CRESCENT WAXING,

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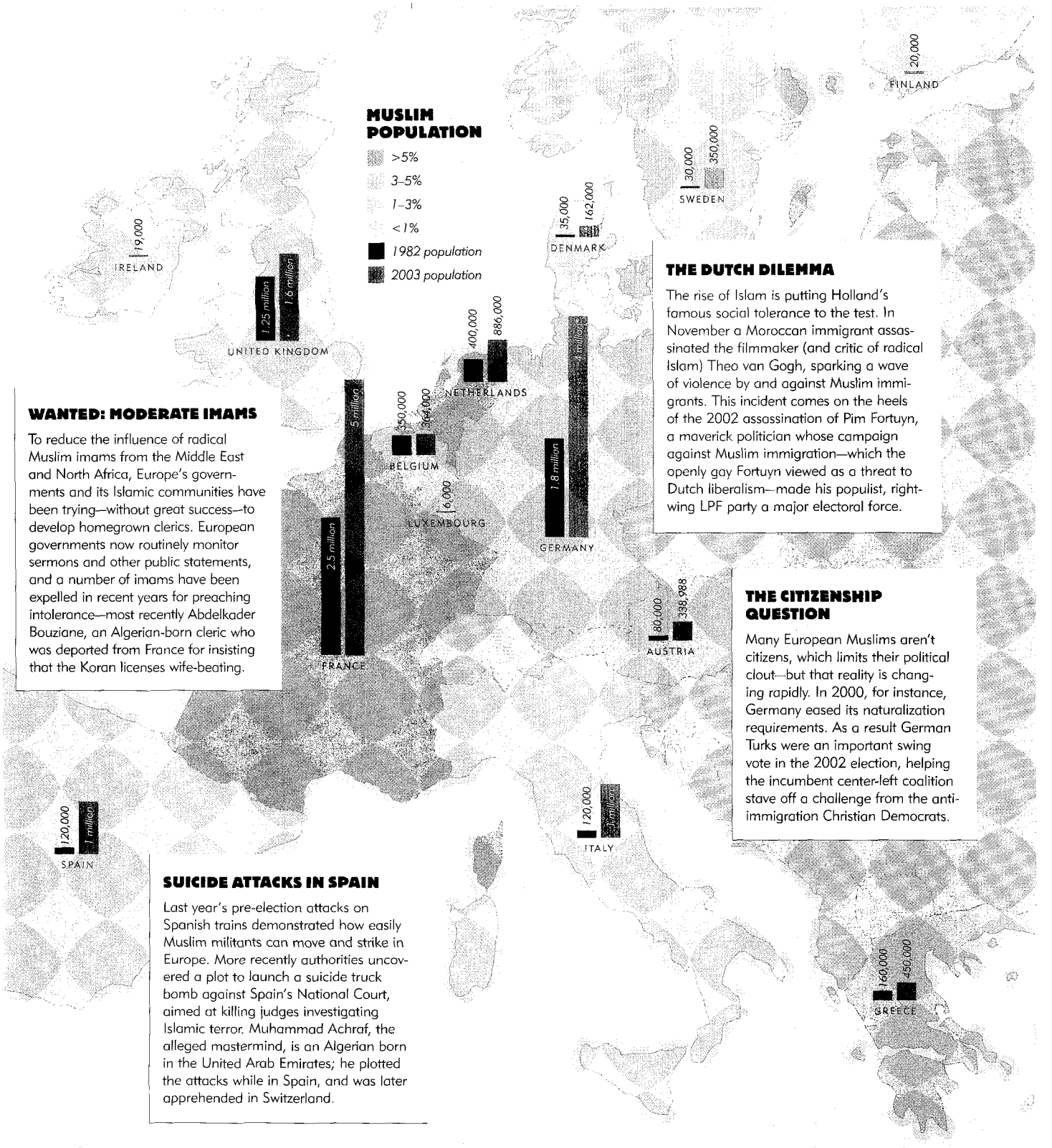

THE DUTCH DILEMMA

The rise of Islam is putting Holland's famous social tolerance to the test. In November a Moroccan immigrant assassinated the filmmaker (and critic of radical Islam) Theo van Gogh, sparking a wave of violence by and against Muslim immigrants. This incident comes on the heels of the 2002 assassination of Pim Fortuyn, a maverick politician whose campaign against Muslim immigration—which the openly gay Fortuyn viewed as a threat to Dutch liberalism—made his populist, right-wing LPF party a major electoral force.

WANTED: MODERATE IMAMS

To reduce the influence of radical Muslim imams from the Middle East and North Africa, Europe's governments and its Islamic communities have been trying—without great success—to develop homegrown clerics. European governments now routinely monitor sermons and other public statements, and a number of imams have been expelled in recent years for preaching intolerance—most recently Abdelkader Bouziane, an Algerian-born cleric who was deported from France for insisting that the Koran licenses wife-beating.

THE CITIZENSHIP QUESTION

Many European Muslims aren't citizens, which limits their political clout—but that reality is changing rapidly. In 2000, for instance, Germany eased its naturalization requirements. As a result German Turks were an important swing vote in the 2002 election, helping the incumbent center-left coalition stave off a challenge from the anti-immigration Christian Democrats.

SUICIDE ATTACKS IN SPAIN

Last year's pre-election attacks on Spanish trains demonstrated how easily Muslim militants can move and strike in Europe. More recently authorities uncovered a plot to launch a suicide truck bomb against Spain's National Court, aimed at killing judges investigating Islamic terror. Muhammad Achraf, the alleged mastermind, is an Algerian born in the United Arab Emirates; he plotted the attacks while in Spain, and was later apprehended in Switzerland.

cal tendencies in European Islam . . . the majority of Muslim youth understand themselves to be stakeholders in European society." But last year Timothy Savage, the chief of the U.S. State Department's Northern Europe and Regional Analysis Division, insisted that "younger Muslims are resisting assimilation into secular European societies even more steadfastly than the older generation did." Nevertheless, the overall challenge is clear: European societies, never known for their melting-pot ethos, must find a way to assimilate an ever larger Muslim population over the next half century. And the United States must prosecute a conflict with radical Islam while managing a set of skeptical allies whose Muslim populations are restive, growing, and susceptible to radicalism.

"The most important battle in the war for Muslim minds during the next decade will be fought not in Palestine or Iraq," Gilles Kepel, a French scholar of radical Islam, recently observed, but "on the outskirts of London, Paris, and other European cities, where Islam is already a growing part of the West."

—*Ross Douthat*

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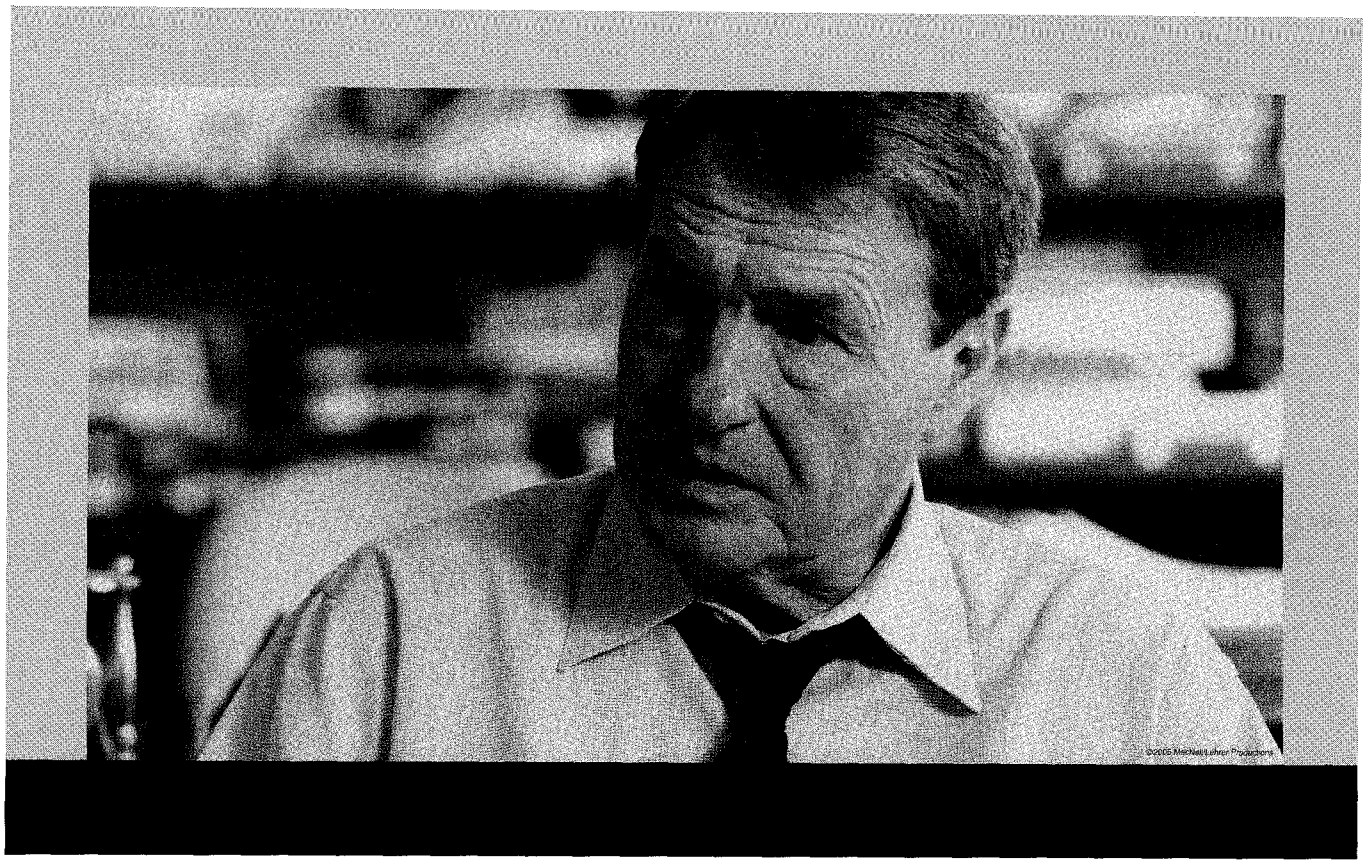

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TEN YEARS LATER

"Then the second wave of al-Qaeda attacks hit America." A leading expert on counterterrorism imagines the future history of the war on terror. A frightening picture of a country still at war in 2011

BY RICHARD A. CLARKE

Photomontages by John Ritter

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This is a transcript of the Tenth Anniversary 9/11 Lecture
Sunday, September 11, 2011
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Professor Roger McBride

Dean, Honored Guests,

It is a great honor to be chosen to give this tenth-anniversary lecture. This year, more than at any other time since the beginning of the war on terror, I think we can see clearly how that war has changed our country. Now that the terror seems finally to have receded somewhat, perhaps we can begin to consider the steps necessary to return the United States to what it was before 9/11. To do so, however, we must be clear about what has happened over the past ten years. Thus tonight I will dwell on the history of the war on terror.

2001–2004: THE RESPONSE TO 9/11

Having ignored al-Qaeda until September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush responded to the attack in three ways. First, he ordered an end to the terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan. For five years thereafter a token U.S. military force assisted the Kabul government in its attempts to rule the warlords and suppress the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Second, he moved to strengthen U.S. domestic law enforcement with the first Patriot Act (a law that civil libertarians would find benign from today's perspective) and the Department of Homeland Security, which in those early years of the war on terror was largely ineffectual.[1] Third, Bush ordered the ill-fated invasion and occupation of Iraq, which effectively turned his administration into an active recruiting office for al-Qaeda and other *jihadi* groups around the world.

The move against Afghanistan did set al-Qaeda and the *jihadi* movement back. Although regional affiliates were able to stage spectacular attacks in Riyadh, Istanbul, Bali, Madrid, Baghdad, and elsewhere, and although there were twice as many attacks worldwide in the three years after 9/11 as there had been in the five years before that day, no al-Qaeda-related attacks took place in the United States in the years immediately following 9/11.

The several years without an attack on U.S. soil lulled some Americans into thinking that the war on terror was taking place only overseas. Few corporations increased security spending. Americans increasingly questioned President Bush's security policies, the Patriot Act, and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge's ridiculed color codes. In the 2004 presidential election George W. Bush won a second term in part by dismissing such issues as whether the mishandling of the Iraq War had made us less secure, whether we had paid enough attention to al-Qaeda, and whether we were adequately addressing our vulnerabilities at home.

Then the second wave of al-Qaeda attacks hit America. Since then we have spiraled downward in terms of economic strength, national security, and civil liberties. No one could stand here today, in 2011, and say that America has won the war on terror. To understand how we failed to win, and exactly what has been lost along the way, I want to look at the past seven years in some detail.

2005: RETURN TO THE HOMELAND BATTLEFIELDS

The U.S. government had predicted that future attacks, if they came, would likely be on financial institutions, noting that Osama bin Laden had issued instructions to destroy the U.S. economy. Thus when the casinos were attacked, it was a surprise. It shouldn't have been; we knew

[1] As of June 28, 2004, about a year after the Department of Homeland Security's operational startup, only forty of 104 key changes recommended by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) had been implemented. "Status of Key Recommendations," GAO-04-865R, July 2, 2004.

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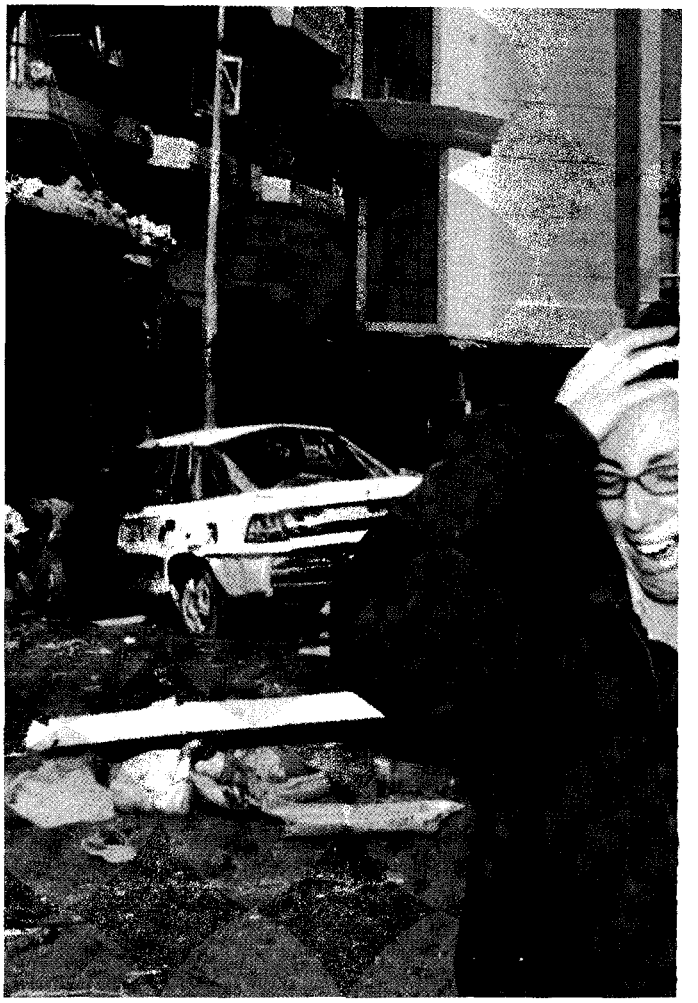
that Las Vegas had been under surveillance by al-Qaeda since at least 2001. Despite that knowledge casino owners had done little to increase security, not wanting to slow people down on their way into the city's pleasure palaces.[2] Theme-park owners were also locked into a pre-9/11, "it can't happen here" mindset, and consequently were caught off guard, as New Yorkers and Washingtonians had been in 2001. The first post-9/11 attacks on U.S. soil came not from airplanes but from backpacks and Winnebagos. They were aimed at places where we used to have fun, what we then called "vacation destinations." These places were particularly hard to defend.

Peter and Margaret Rataczak, of Wichita, Kansas, were the first to die on June 29, 2005, in a new wave of suicide attacks launched against the United States in retaliation for the killing of Osama bin Laden that spring, and for the continuing presence of U.S. troops in Iraq. These attacks were every bit as well planned as those of 9/11 and, in typical al-Qaeda fashion, used low-technology means to achieve maximum public impact. What we know about the attacks' planning and execution comes in large part from tourists who provided photos and video from their travels. Without these images we might never have known that the Rataczaks' killers were non-Arab. It would also have been harder to discover that they seem to have entered the United States by driving across the border from Canada.[3]

In order to save money for the poker tables that night, Peter chose to stay at an RV campground, parking his Winnebago at around 4:00 P.M. Shortly thereafter a casually dressed Asian couple approached the Rataczaks' secluded campsite with a map unfolded in front of them. Only the birds heard the silenced shots. The first murders by the group calling itself al-Qaeda of North America had been carried out.

With the bodies in the back of the darkened camper, the Asian couple drove back toward a safe house they had quietly rented in the hills. (The landlord had no reason to suspect they were fundamentalist Muslims; their religion



was of no concern to him. Nor, certainly, would his standard background credit check have turned up their association with an Indonesian al-Qaeda affiliate.) The man quickly backed into the garage and loaded an ammonium nitrate device into the van. His leader had said the device would force the unbelievers in "Sin City" to realize that even in their ignorance they were guilty of conspiring with the Zionists to destroy Islam. After a good night's sleep and his morning prayers, the man carefully helped the woman into her vest and belt before leaving her to finish dressing and praying.

It was only an hour's drive to the city limits, and the man was careful never to exceed the speed limit. State troopers at the exit ramp to the city ignored the van. At 3:00 P.M. the streets were packed as crowds wandered the Strip. On Tropicana Avenue the man stopped briefly to let his partner out with an exchange of nods and a whispered

[2] Surveillance tapes obtained in 2002 by Justice Department officials in Detroit and Spanish authorities in Madrid included footage of the MGM Grand, Excalibur, and New York, New York casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, along with the World Trade Center in New York and Disneyland, in California. Las Vegas authorities and casino representatives declined to alert the public, possibly fearing a decline in tourism or an increase in the casinos' legal liability. "Despite Two Terror Tapes, Public Not Alerted to Vegas Threat, Memos Show," Associated Press, August 10, 2004. Also "Las Vegas, California Authorities Reacted Differently to Same al-Qaida Footage," Associated Press, August 11, 2004.

[3] Canada's ethnically diverse population, liberal immigration and refugee policies, and long border with the United States make it a good place for terrorists to raise funds, procure supplies and fake documents, and plan attacks. The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service acknowledged in 2003 that it considered more than 300 people in Canada to be members of various terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda.

The Mexican border is even more porous than the Canadian. More than 4,000 illegal immigrants cross into Arizona alone each day. Most are Mexican, but a large number hail from other countries. The Border Patrol, less than 10,000 strong, is no match for this enormous wave. For every person it picks up, at least three elude capture. "The Challenge of Terror," *Time International*, January 27, 2003. Also "Who Left the Door Open?" *Time*, September 20, 2004.

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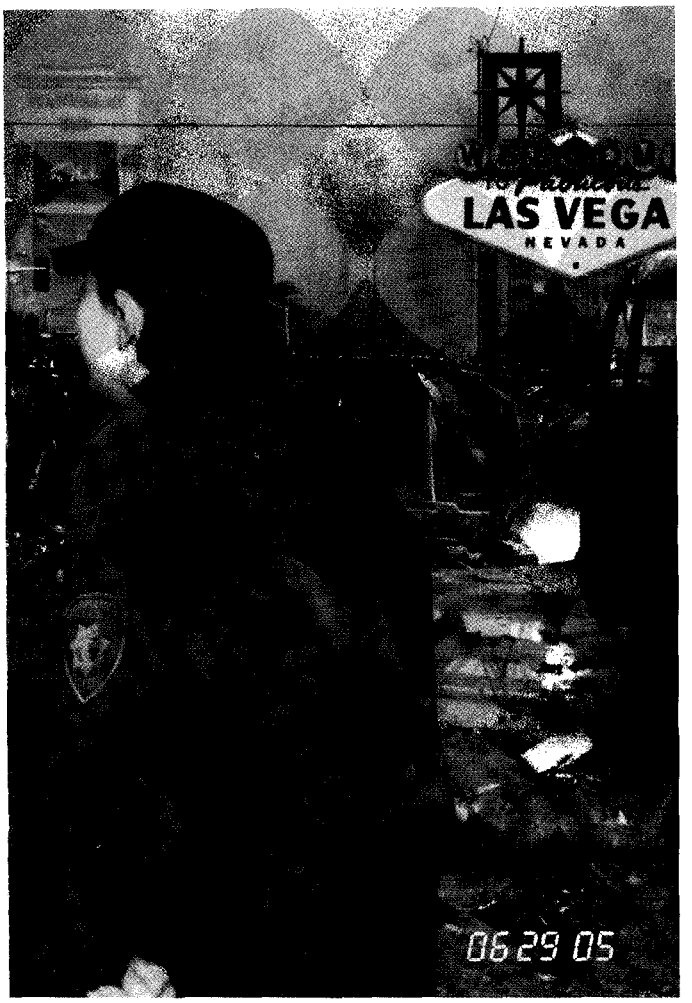

statement: "God is great." The woman blended seamlessly into the flow of people walking into the Florentine casino, looking like one of the millions of annual visitors to Las Vegas from the Pacific Rim. She seemed a little heavy for her frame, and the jacket she wore seemed a little out of place in the heat, but the doormen, as security videos later showed, didn't even give her a second look. She had been there many times before.

The woman never hesitated. She walked to the roulette table, fifty feet from the front door, and pushed a detonator, blowing herself up. The explosion instantly killed thirty-eight people who were standing and sitting at nearby tables. The nails and ball bearings that flew out of the woman's vest and belt wounded more than a hundred others, even though slot machines absorbed many of the miniature missiles.[4] Eighteen of the hundreds of elderly gamblers in the casino suffered heart attacks that proved fatal when they could not be treated fast enough amid the rubble.

Just seconds later the man drove his van into the lobby of the Lion's Grand and detonated his cargo. This bomb was designed to wreak tremendous damage that would remain in the consciousness of the American people for years to come. Whereas the damage done to the Florentine casino was repaired in just under a month, the billion-dollar Lion's Grand was closed for more than a year while security enhancements and structural improvements were made. Losing the use of 5,034 rooms, plus casino gaming and concerts and other special events, cost the Lion's Grand a million dollars a day, and damaged its bond rating.

The long-term economic effects continue today: tourism in Las Vegas has never returned to its pre-2005 level, and unemployment in the city is at 28 percent.[5]

The attacks in Nevada occurred at almost the same time as the ones in Florida, California, Texas, and New Jersey. Two women strolling separately through Mouseworld's Showcase of the Future detonated their exploding belts in the vicinity of tour groups in the "Mexican Holiday" and "Austrian Biergarten" exhibits. Similar attacks took place at WaterWorld, in California; Seven Pennants, near Dallas; and the Rosebud Casino, in Atlantic City. By the end of the day 1,032 people were dead and more than 4,000 wounded. The victims included many children and elderly citizens. Among the dead were only eight terrorists, two each from Iraq, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

The next morning CNN's Los Angeles bureau received a video purporting to be from al-Qaeda of North America. On the tape the group claimed responsibility for the incidents and pledged that attacks would continue until America left the Middle East. We can all recall the soft, steely voice in which the chilling words were delivered: "We are not terrorists. We are patriots trying to throw off the mantle of an oppressive society. We do not look like you think we do. And we will kill you until you leave our holy lands."

Eyewitnesses supported the recording's assertions, telling investigators that some of the terrorists who had committed these atrocities did not look like Arabs. Three of the terrorists were women. The FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the local authorities were momentarily stunned, and began frantically trying to prepare for what they feared were further imminent attacks. The DHS raised the nationwide terror-alert level to red.

The social effect of the attacks was widespread. In Detroit, northern New Jersey, northern Virginia, and southern California armed gangs of local youths attacked mosques and Islamic centers. At the request of local clerics,

[4] According to notebooks kept by *jihadi* students in Uzbekistan in the mid-1990s, instruction in explosive devices—from antipersonnel mines to bombs capable of destroying buildings—was a standard part of the curriculum at terrorist training camps. "The Terrorist Notebooks," *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2003.

[5] After 9/11 the casino operator MGM Mirage—which owns the Mirage, the MGM Grand, and the Bellagio, among others—reported that its fourth-quarter earnings for 2001 were about a third of what they had been the year before (www.bizjournals.com/pacific/stories/2002/01/28/daily54.html).

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the governor of Michigan ordered National Guard units into the city of Dearborn and parts of Detroit to stop the vigilante violence against Islamic residents.

The reaction from the White House and Congress was swift. Patriot Act II, which had been languishing on Capitol Hill, passed in July. As more evidence was made public, it became increasingly clear that the attacks had been perpetrated by terrorists who were in the United States illegally, either on false passports or having overstayed their visas.[6] Two were Iraqis pretending to be South Africans, using passports that had been stolen in Cape Town the year before.[7] Others had actually been picked up before the attacks for being "out of visa status," but had been released because immigration detention facilities were full.[8]

The attorney general sought broad emergency powers to impose extended pre-arraignment detention, investigative confinement, broader material-witness authority, and expanded deportation authority. After the passage of Patriot Act II, federal agents conducted large-scale roundups of illegal immigrants and members of ethnic groups that were suspected of hiding terrorists in their midst. Many citizens who had been forcibly detained were held "with probable cause" for allegedly "planning, assisting, or executing an act of terrorism"; they were denied access to an attorney for up to seven days, "by order of the judicial officer on a showing that the individual arrested has information which may prevent a terrorist attack."[9] Many detainees, if they failed to produce proof of citizenship or immigrant status, were moved to new DHS illegal-immigration detention facilities for further investigation and possible deportation. The camps were in remote areas, including one in Arizona that ended up holding 42,000 suspected illegals.[10]

Although the American Civil Liberties Union vigorously condemned these roundups, most of the public accepted them as not only a suitable precaution against possible future attacks but also a brake on further vigilante violence.[11] The fear that follow-on attacks were likely was enough to satisfy the judiciary that state and federal law enforcement should be allowed to begin broad sweeps of communities suspected of harboring sympathizers.

Roundups based on ethnicity succeeded only in enraging local ethnic communities. This made it more difficult for the authorities to enlist cooperation in either investigating hate crimes or preventing future attacks from within these communities. Despite earlier warnings from sympathetic foreign officials, the U.S. government, with the support of federal judges and the American people, deemed these detentions the only way to hold those who had collaborated with the suicide bombers and to capture those who might carry out the next attack.[12] In short, "the gravest imminent danger to the public safety," which had justified the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II, was invoked again to support

[6] The 9/11 Commission's investigation into the attacks of 2001 found that lax screening by immigration officials and poor communication between security agencies allowed the hijackers to enter the United States even though they used fraudulent passports, provided incomplete and false statements on visa applications, and were listed as suspect in intelligence-community information systems. As many as fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were potentially vulnerable to interception by border authorities, the commission concluded. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, Norton, 2004.

[7] According to Belgian police, 19,050 blank Belgian passports have been stolen from various embassies, consulates, and town halls since 1990. Belgium's poor security, as well as the country's location at the crossroads of Europe (through which a high volume of human traffic passes), makes it an attractive base for terrorists and a global capital of identity fraud. Thousands of passports stolen from other countries also circulate on the black market. "How to Fake a Passport," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 10, 2002.

[8] On July 19, 2004, days after wading across the Rio Grande, a Pakistani woman with a doctored South African passport was arrested at an airport in Texas. Because of inadequate funding, the DHS's Office of Detention and Removal is capable of detaining only about 200,000 illegal immigrants a year—even though some 1.2 million are apprehended. The lack of space has led to a system of "catch and release," in which border officials return hundreds of thousands of Mexican nationals to Mexico, only to see them return repeatedly to the United States. Non-Mexican illegals are released directly into U.S. communities on personal-recognizance bonds with summonses to appear in court. More than 90 percent never show up. Not even all those illegal immigrants from countries that sponsor terrorism, such as Syria and Iran, are detained, because the DHS is not required by statute to detain illegal aliens unless they are felons, known terrorists, associates of terrorists, or persons suspected of certain other criminal violations. "Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World," House Select Committee on Homeland Security, September 2004.

[9] These procedures for treatment of detainees are drawn from recommendations made by the anti-terrorism experts Philip Heymann and Juliette Kayyem in their final report for Harvard University's Long-Term Legal Strategy Project. In the report the authors strive to balance the need for increased security in the post-9/11 world with the obligation to protect civil liberties. Philip B. Heymann and Juliette N. Kayyem, "Preserving Security and Democratic Freedoms in the War on Terrorism," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, November 16, 2004.

[10] In August of 2002 Attorney General John Ashcroft indicated his desire to create separate camps for U.S. citizens held indefinitely as "enemy combatants." The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency currently operates or oversees more than fifteen detention facilities (most of which are categorized as Service Processing Centers) around the country for housing illegal aliens. "Camps for Citizens: Ashcroft's Hellish Vision," *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2002. Also www.ice.gov/graphics/dro/index.htm.

[11] After 9/11 the FBI noted a 1600 percent increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims—481 incidents in 2001, compared with twenty-eight in 2000. *Hate Crime Statistics 2000* and *Hate Crime Statistics 2001*, FBI.

[12] In 1998 Lord Alfred Dubs, a member of Parliament from Northern Ireland, said of his country's experience with terrorists, "The Government have long held the view that internment does not represent an effective counterterrorism measure ... The power of internment has been shown to be counterproductive in terms of the tension and divisions which it creates."

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the widespread use of pre-trial detentions and material-witness warrants.[13]

Over the objections of the Pentagon, Congress had in 2004 created a cabinet-level director of national intelligence and given the position budgetary control of all intelligence agencies and operational control over all agencies except the Defense Intelligence Agency and the armed services' individual intelligence branches. By this point most Americans were well aware of the lapses in U.S. intelligence produced by a lack of spies in the Middle East.[14] Not long after 9/11 George Tenet, then the director of the CIA, had suggested that it would take at least five years to raise the CIA's human-intelligence capacity to where it needed to be. Although the new law gave the national intelligence director the muscle to manage all U.S. intelligence, Tenet turned out to have been right: it took more than five years to train even a fraction of the new field agents needed for a global war on terror.

One price the United States has paid for security is a significant decrease in foreign students at our colleges and universities, effectively preventing young people from all over the world from meeting one another and building bridges between warring ideologies. Foreign attendance is now down by more than a third from what it was in 2001, resulting in the closing or consolidation of some graduate programs in science and engineering, and producing severe budget cuts in others.[15] At the same time, research institutions in France, England, India, China, and Singapore have all grown. Many of us are now using the Asiapac operating system on our laptops and taking drugs imported from such foreign companies as Stemlabs and EuroPharmatica.

[13] In *Korematsu* v. *United States* (1944) the Supreme Court ruled that "the gravest imminent danger to the public safety" justified the internment of Japanese-American citizens as necessary to prevent "espionage and sabotage in an area threatened by Japanese attack." In his opinion Justice Hugo Black wrote, "Compulsory exclusion of large groups of citizens from their homes, except under circumstances of direst emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when under conditions of modern warfare our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger."

[14] In early 2002 the GAO revealed a dearth of translators, interpreters, diplomats, and intelligence specialists with adequate foreign-language skills in the U.S. Army, the Department of State, the Department of Commerce's Foreign Commercial Service, and the FBI. Follow-up reports over the next two years acknowledged the State Department's efforts to address its staffing shortfalls but pointed out the still dire shortage of foreign-service officers proficient in Arabic, Russian, Chinese, and other languages. "Foreign Languages: Human Capital Approach Needed to Correct Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls," GAO-02-375, January 2002. Also "State Department: Targets for Hiring, Filling Vacancies Overseas Being Met, but Gaps Remain in Hard-to-Learn Languages," GAO-04-139, November 2003.

[15] Student visa applications fell by 21 percent from 2001 to 2004, and the number of graduate school applications from foreign students has dropped by 32 percent in the past year alone. "State, Homeland Security Urged to Overhaul Student Visa Process," *Government Executive*, August 2, 2004.

The summer and autumn of 2005 passed without further attacks. By Thanksgiving many Americans believed what government spokesmen were telling them: that the attacks had been the work of eight isolated terrorists, the last of Khalid Sheikh Muhammad's al-Qaeda cells in America.

The government spokesmen were wrong.

On December 2, 2005, the Mall of the States became a victim of a low-tech terrorist attack. In the preceding years malls in Israel, Finland, and the Philippines had been attacked; so far, American malls had been spared. As security professionals knew, this was partly luck; such targets are difficult to protect.[16] In June of 2004, after learning of intelligence reports indicating that the Madrid train bombers had originally planned to strike a suburban shopping area, Charles Schumer, a Democratic senator from New York, called for increased funding to secure U.S. shopping centers and malls.[17] Congress chose instead to focus on defending other targets against more-sophisticated terrorist acts.

The 4.2-million-square-foot mall, located in Minnesota, was globally recognized as the largest entertainment and retail complex in America, welcoming more than 42 million visitors each year, or 117,000 a day. On this day neither the 160 security cameras surveying the mall nor the 150 safety officers guarding it were able to detect, deter, or defend against the terrorists.[18] Four men, disguised as private mall-security officers and armed with TEC-9 submachine guns, street-sweeper 12-gauge shotguns, and dynamite, entered the mall at two points and began executing shoppers at will.

It had not been hard for the terrorists to buy all their guns legally, in six different states across the Midwest. A year earlier Congress had failed to reauthorize the assault-weapons ban. Attorney General John Ashcroft had announced a proposal, on July 6, 2001, to have the FBI destroy records of weapons sales and background checks the day after the gun dealer had the sale approved. This meant that if a gun buyer subsequently turned up on the new Integrated Watch List, or was discovered by law-enforcement officials to be a felon or a suspected terrorist,

[16] Unlike airports and government buildings, which screen people and bags, shopping malls currently have no security checks at their entrances. Visitors may move about freely, carrying large bags and packages. Shopping centers must tread a thin line between keeping the public safe and scaring it away. "Soft-Target Protection: Keeping Shopping Malls Safe," *Homeland Security*, June 2004.

[17] Schumer's announcement followed the Justice Department's indictment of a Somali man involved in an alleged al-Qaeda plot to bomb a shopping mall near Columbus, Ohio. "New Intelligence Shows Terrorists Targeting Shopping Centers; Feds Need Stronger Response to Strengthen Security in Malls," Office of Senator Charles Schumer, June 20, 2004.

[18] According to *Access Control & Security Systems* magazine, "the Mall of America CCTV system covers nearly 1.6 million square feet of mall plus several acres of parking lots." *Access Control & Security Systems*, March 1, 1997.

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when government authorities tried to investigate the sale, the record of the purchase would already be on the way to the shredder.[19]

The panic and confusion brought on by the terrorists' opening volleys led many shoppers to run away from one pair of murderers and into the path of the other, leading to more carnage. Two off-duty police officers were cited for bravery after they took down one pair of terrorists with their personal weapons, before the local SWAT team could get to the scene. Meanwhile, one of the other terrorists used his cell phone to remotely detonate the rental van he had driven to the mall; this resulted in even more chaos in the parking garages. Once the SWAT team arrived, it made short work of the two remaining terrorists. By the time the smoke had cleared, more than 300 people were dead and 400 lay wounded. In the confusion of the firefight the SWAT team had killed six mall guards and wounded two police officers.[20]

At the same moment, at the Tower Place, in Chicago; the Crystal Place, in Dallas; the Rappamassis Mall, in Virginia; and the Beverly Forest Mall, in Los Angeles, the scene was much the same: four shooters and hundreds of dead shoppers. America's holiday mall shopping effectively ended that day, as customers retreated to the safety of online retail.

The December attacks were achieved with a relatively small amount of ammonium nitrate, some Semtex plastic explosive, and a few assault weapons in the hands of twenty people who were willing to die. Some of the terrorists were Iraqis, members of the fedayeen militias, who had been radicalized by the American presence in Baghdad. Others were Saudis. Only one was captured alive, at the Rappamassis Mall. Through continued questioning of him, said to involve CIA-trained interrogators, it was discovered that more shootings were planned for the New Year. Acting on this information, FBI agents, in concert with the Texas Rangers and the Seattle police, thwarted two follow-up attacks, aimed at New Year's Eve festivities on Sixth Street

in Austin and in the Pike Place Market area of Seattle.

As the bloody year ended, the president pointed to our having prevented those two attacks as evidence that we had turned a corner, and that the United States would be safer in 2006.[21]

2006: Mobilizing the Home Front

Well before the end of the first quarter of 2006 the economic effects of the previous year's attacks were clear. The closing of casinos and theme parks around the country had increased only regional unemployment, but the national effect on the already ailing airline industry was significant. The pre-Christmas attacks on shopping centers had been the most damaging of all. Economic indicators in the first quarter of 2006 showed the dramatic ripple effect of the collapse of retail shopping on top of the earlier economic devastation of recreational

[19] The changes to the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), ultimately implemented in 2004, came on the heels of an earlier rule change, also proposed and implemented by the Ashcroft Justice Department, reducing the maximum retention period for information relating to firearms sales from six months to three months. In 2002 a GAO study found that the next-day destruction of records would prevent the FBI from identifying mistaken firearms transactions and initiating retrieval actions. Federal Register Vol. 66, No. 130 (July 6, 2001). Also "Gun Control: Potential Effects of Next-Day Destruction of NICS Background Check Records," GAO-02-653, July 10, 2002.

[20] Lack of coordination among first responders is a continuing problem, and communications breakdowns (which caused so many deaths among police and firefighters on 9/11) can be lethal. Brian Jackson, D. J. Peterson et al., "Protecting Emergency Responders: Lessons Learned From Terrorist Attacks," RAND, 2002. Also "Emergency Responders: Drastically Underfunded, Dangerously Unprepared," Council on Foreign Relations, June 2003.

[21] The State Department keeps track of the number of terrorist attacks and publishes an annual report, "Patterns of Global Terrorism," through its Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. The initial report, published on April 29, 2004, under-reported the number of attacks in 2003, but the revised report, published on June 22, 2004, revealed that 208 acts of international terrorism took place in 2003, up from 205 in 2002.

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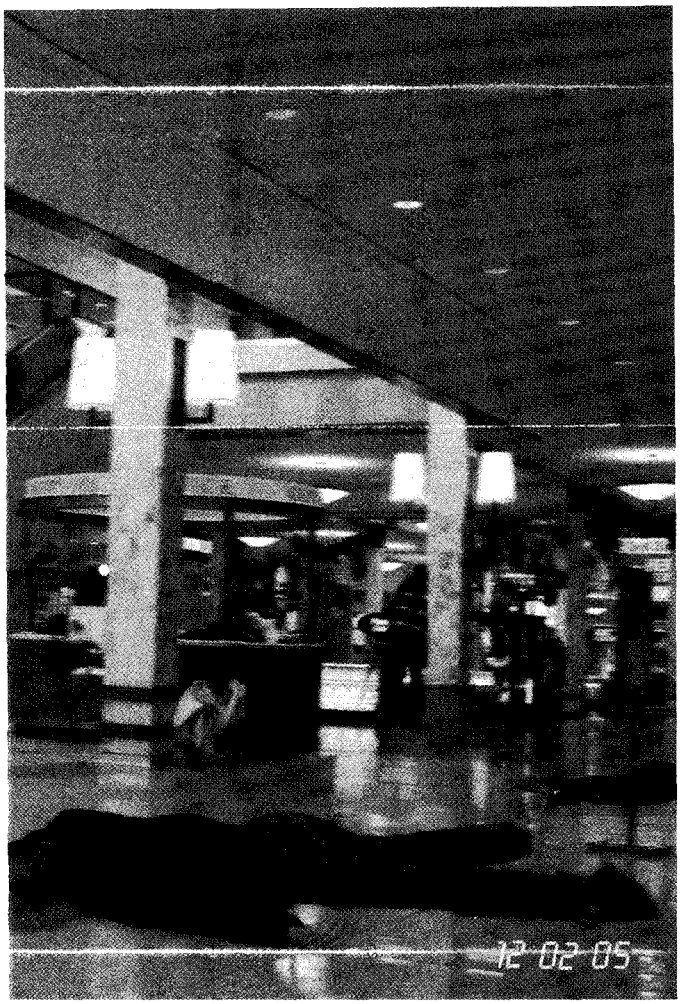

travel: GDP growth was negative, and national unemployment hit 9.5 percent in January.[22]

There were rumors that in his State of the Union speech the president would call for the military to take on more security missions at home and would federalize all National Guard units. Acting to pre-empt him, eighteen governors met and announced that they were abolishing their National Guard forces and creating state militias, which could not be put under Washington's control and could not be sent overseas.[23] Speaking for the rebellious governors, Rhode Island's chief executive said, "The promises of more security at home have yet to be backed by concrete action. Our modern-day Minutemen are needed in Woonsocket, not Fallujah. My problem is empty shopping malls, not whether Shiites or Sunnis or Kurds or Turkmen run this or that part of Iraq." She then ordered the first units of the Ocean State Militia to begin screening cars and shoppers at three shopping centers. Rhode Islanders emerged from their homes in response.

In January, when the president actually delivered the speech, he called for immediate passage of Patriot Act III. "We are a nation at war," he said. "We need to start acting that way. We can no longer be in denial. We must mobilize the home front." To that end he proposed four things: adding 200,000 members of the Army, to compensate for National Guard shortfalls; deploying three squadrons of new unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to conduct reconnaissance in the United States; suspending the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act (which had prevented the military from conducting arrests in the United States); and modifying the charter of the National Security Agency to permit "unfettered use of its capabilities" in support of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.[24] Several senators immediately denounced the plan as the militarization of America, and promised to filibuster to stop the law's passage. Polls showed that 62 percent of Americans believed the president knew best what was necessary to defend America.

Skeptical civil libertarians were concerned that the new UAVs, which included Predators and Global Hawks, would be deployed not only to kill or intercept terrorists but also to monitor Americans. Girded by the polls, the president pressed forward with his plan. The secretary of homeland security welcomed the additional monitors, saying, "The more eyes we have looking at our coastline and borders, the more likely we are to interdict future terrorists and deter their attacks." The Air Force announced that deploying these UAV patrols domestically would finally provide large municipalities with the air security they demanded. The governors and mayors did not complain.

Then came Subway Day. Public-transit systems in Atlanta, Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia were all struck at 8:15 A.M. eastern time, on a Monday in April. Unlike the previous year's attacks, these strikes did not appear to involve suicides. The bombs were appar-

[22] Although the direct effects of 9/11 were too small and geographically concentrated to make a measurable dent in the country's overall economic output, the attacks did significantly affect the airline, insurance, agriculture, and food industries, small businesses, and New York City. "The Economic Effects of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment," Congressional Research Service (CRS), September 27, 2002.

[23] National Guard units may be most effective in conducting homeland-security missions when left under state control. Bernard Rostker, "The National Guard and Homeland Security," testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism, and Government Information, December 13, 2001.

[24] Since 9/11 more than 51 percent of Army Guard members and 31 percent of Air Guard members have been activated for homeland-security and overseas missions. Although intended to be a later-deploying reserve force, the Army Guard has taken on extensive ongoing missions. The Air Guard's readiness has declined, because the rapid pace of operations limits training opportunities and creates maintenance challenges in its aging aircraft. The demands of overseas missions have made Guard units unavailable for state needs. "Reserve Forces: Observations on Recent National Guard Use in Overseas and Homeland Missions and Future Challenges," GAO-04-670T, April 29, 2004.

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ently hidden on trains while they sat in rail yards, or were placed in newspaper racks and ticket machines. "We knew something was up," the homeland-security secretary said, in a remark that many believe led to his resignation a week later. "We hesitated to raise the alert level to red again because we lacked actionable intelligence and we didn't want an increase in the terror alert to tip off the terrorists." More than 200 people died and more than 3,000 were injured.[25]

Subways and commuter rail lines in New York, Washington, and Chicago moved quickly to halt trains and clear stations, causing chaos even in those cities that were not under attack. San Francisco closed its system for the day at 5:45 A.M. Pacific time, a half hour after the attacks in the east and before most commuters had left home, forcing workers onto the highways. Most cities kept their transport systems closed for the next day or two, leading to enormous traffic problems and numerous car accidents, as local officials struggled desperately to put passenger-screening systems in place.

The mayor of Chicago, whose security investments and preparations had often been lauded by the homeland-security secretary, was defiant as he pledged to ride the storied "El" to city hall each day. He also promised to speed up the installation of his once controversial "smart" surveillance cameras throughout public areas in the city. The system linked all video monitoring to a central emergency-management site, where police officers and sophisticated software programs could track suspicious activity on public thoroughfares. The mayor's actions received unanimous support from the city council. Chicagoans responded by continuing to use the trains.

Thursday was Railroad Day. Improvised explosive devices—or IEDs, popularized by Iraqi insurgents after the American invasion—exploded as interstate trains passed by or over them in Virginia, Colorado, Missouri, Connecticut, and Illinois.[26] The five charges resulted in almost a hundred deaths. Among the fatalities was the national rail service itself, as terrorists finally broke congressional will to

fund the money-losing venture any further: fifty pounds of explosives had accomplished what no appropriations committee could. It suspended operations that day and went into closure and liquidation the next month.

The "Patriot" line, from Boston to Washington, reopened later, after the Federal Railroad Police were created. The Ferpys, as they quickly became known, eventually took over security for all subway and commuter rail lines except the New York subway (which stubbornly resisted federal protection). The numerous agents on trains, along with the Ferpys' bright-yellow surveillance helicopters, are now a reassuring everyday sight in most large metropolitan areas—supplemented, of course, by the many UAVs, which are much harder to see.

[25] The need to balance security with accessibility and convenience, and the open design of the mass-transit systems, make those systems difficult to secure. Security challenges to both passenger and freight rail systems are compounded by the interconnection of trains with other modes of transportation, such as shipping and trucking. The freight system encompasses more than 100,000 miles of rail in the United States and often transports hazardous materials, providing numerous attractive targets for terrorists. Despite this, the Bush administration has been slow to request dedicated funding for rail security. "Rail Security: Some Actions Taken to Enhance Passenger and Freight Rail Security, but Significant Challenges Remain," GAO-04-598T, March 23, 2004.

[26] Rail security is already hotly debated. On March 22, 2004, Tom Ridge outlined a series of security initiatives for rail and mass-transit systems, including training additional bomb-detecting canine teams; developing biological, chemical, and explosive countermeasures; and screening baggage. Critics argue that these initiatives do not address immediate security concerns, the need for additional funding, or the lack of coordination between the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation. The DHS still lacks a plan to secure public-transportation networks. "Fact Sheet: Rail and Transit Security Initiatives," DHS, March 22, 2004. Also "America at Risk: Closing the Public Transportation Security Gap," Congressman Jim Turner, Democratic Staff Report, Select Committee on Homeland Security, May 2004. Also "Rail Safety and Security: Some Actions Already Taken to Enhance Rail Security, but Risk-based Plan Needed," GAO-03-435, April 2003.

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Although Congress acted quickly on the president's proposal, creating the Ferpys took time. It was 2007 before all 155,000 officers had been hired, trained, and deployed. That delay was the major reason the Army went into the cities.

Most analysts now agree that Subway Day and Railroad Day not only caused the Senate filibuster to end, permitting the passage of Patriot Act III, but also finally triggered the withdrawal of some 40,000 troops from Iraq. The Army was needed in the subways.

In announcing the Reaction Enclave Strategy, the CENTCOM commander acknowledged, "Our goal now is just to prevent Iraq from becoming a series of terrorist training camps. If the new Iraqi army can't keep the peace among the factions, that's its problem." The strategy, which was also adopted in Afghanistan, has reduced the U.S. force deployment to those troops necessary to sanitize the area around the U.S. Counter-Terrorism Reaction Force (CTRF) camps. Iraq, with its three bases, and Afghanistan, with its two, require only 20,000 and 7,500 members of the U.S. armed forces respectively. Although some have criticized military and political leaders for allowing both countries to become "failed states" again, our CTRFs do at least retain the ability to strike terrorist facilities whenever they are detected. Improved intelligence collection and analysis have increased the success rate of the CTRFs and limited collateral damage.

The attacks in April of 2006 finally made possible the creation of the National Transportation Security Identity Card, or SID, as we now call it.[27] Recall that before 2006 each of the fifty states actually issued its own card, in the form of a driver's license. The SID is a biometric smart card with the owner's photo, retinal signature, fingerprints, Social Security number, birthday, and address encoded in it. It has (so far, anyway) proved foolproof. Today a SID is required for passage through card-reader turnstiles at train stations, subway stations, and airports. Soon all automobiles will be equipped with SID readers connected to their ignition systems.

Even the Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, whose wariness of unnecessary government intrusion is well known, had acknowledged several years earlier that a national ID card would offer some benefits. Just a few weeks after 9/11 Dershowitz wrote,

> Anyone who had the card could be allowed to pass through airports or building security more expeditiously, and anyone who opted out could be examined much more closely. As a civil libertarian, I am instinctively skeptical of such tradeoffs. But I support a national identity card with a chip that can match the holder's fingerprint. It could be an effective tool for preventing terrorism, reducing the need for other law-enforcement mechanisms—especially racial and ethnic profiling—that pose even greater dangers to civil liberties ... A national ID card would not prevent all threats of terrorism, but it would make it more difficult for potential terrorists to hide in open view, as many of the Sept. 11 hijackers apparently managed to do.

The American Civil Liberties Union had disagreed, arguing not only that the government would misuse ID cards but also that corporations would be allowed to learn more about our private habits, and that foreign-looking people would still suffer more discrimination. The National Rifle Association made common cause with the ACLU, noting that requiring gun buyers to use the card would create a de facto gun registry. For several years the ACLU, the NRA, and their supporters helped prevent the introduction of a national ID card. After the mall massacres, perpetrated with assault rifles, Congress finally broke ranks with its NRA donors.

Not only has the SID increased identity security, but it could ultimately yield billions of dollars in savings by reducing bureaucracy. Local governments are using it to improve the delivery of state services and to cut down on waste and fraud by adding other information (gun and

[27] For some years various experts have been recommending that states issue "smart ID cards" containing digitally encoded biometric data. Shane Ham and Robert D. Atkinson, "Modernizing the State Identification System: An Action Agenda," Progressive Policy Institute, February 7, 2002.

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fishing licenses; welfare, unemployment, and insurance information) to the card.

The SID uses the same technology that has also been put in place on all shipping containers, which now incorporate tags that can provide location data when swept by a radar beam. Radar beams from towers, UAVs, and even satellites cause a SID to emit a signal that rides back to the transceiver on the return beam. That signal provides the card's number, and the processor computes its location. The signal is no stronger than that used for years at airports and in police speed traps. It is almost certainly safe, according to studies by the National Institutes of Health.[28]

There were those who thought that the radar signals would be used to track Americans carrying the SID. The homeland-security secretary declared, "Our computers do not have the processing capability to track that many signals. We are focused on maintaining the integrity of our immigration system by keeping illegals out and expelling those individuals staying beyond their visas. We use the US-VISIT cards to do that." Still, some Americans refused to sign up for a SID. They are the people you now see waiting in lines at airports for the special interrogation and search procedures.

The suspension of rail transport for parts of 2006, along with the collapse of the national rail service and some of the airlines, exacerbated the economic problems that had emerged in 2005 and caused national unemployment to reach double digits by December. The GDP declined again, as both the manufacturing and retail sectors suffered. The federal deficit as a percentage of GDP reached a new high, because the government needed to pay for additional security measures but, with the economy in such poor shape, didn't dare to raise taxes.

2007: IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA

At the beginning of the year three decisions demonstrated the differences between America and Europe yet again.

First, Chuck Hagel, a Republican senator from Nebraska, sponsored a resolution calling on the administration to reach out to the Islamic world with a number of specific proposals and to join the proposed EU Tolerance and Reconciliation Initiative. For several years Hagel had been articulating a foreign-policy strategy based on the "humble" approach promised by President Bush before 9/11.[29] Early in 2007 the administration rejected the Hagel resolution as "buckling under to terrorists." The plan went down to defeat in the Senate.

Second, the European Union reached a compromise on the issue of admitting Turkey. The EU president claimed that Turkey's membership would destabilize the "Christian EU" and flood Europe with Muslim immigrants.[30] Turkey agreed to a limit on immigration and was admitted. The EU passed the Tolerance and Reconciliation Initiative and opened talks with the nations of the Islamic Conference.

Third, the United States and Europe parted ways over what to do about "definitive intelligence" showing that Iran had six nuclear devices ready to be mounted on mobile long-range missiles. The war on terror had, admittedly, distracted U.S. national-security officials from dealing with Iran and nuclear proliferation generally.[31]

We had suspected that Iran had assembled some nuclear weapons, but only owing to the good work of the British Secret Intelligence Service did we learn that all the weapons would be in one place at one time. The president decided to launch a pre-emptive attack; given the circumstances, he could hardly have done otherwise. The B-2 strike in May did indisputably destroy all the mobile missiles and their launchers. (Regrettably, it also killed some Chinese defense contractors.) To the president's dismay, the attack apparently did not destroy any of the nuclear warheads, because they had not yet arrived at the base. Intelligence is still not good enough to provide precision. The good news was that without their missiles, the Iranians had very few ways of using their nuclear warheads. The bad news was that this revived fears that the warheads would fall into terrorist hands.

The Iranians responded to the attack by launching their older SCUD missiles, armed with conventional warheads, at the Saudi oil facilities at Ras Tanura. Iranian navy

[28] The growth of new technologies using radiofrequency fields (RF)—mobile phone systems, radio and television transmitters, medical equipment, radar systems—has led to numerous studies examining their effects on human health. A comprehensive review provisionally concluded that these studies presented no consistent or conclusive evidence of a causal relationship between RF exposure and any adverse health effect, but the studies have too many deficiencies to rule out an association completely. Anders Ahlbom et al., "Epidemiology of Health Effects of Radiofrequency Exposure," *Environmental Health Perspectives*, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, September 23, 2004.

[29] Hagel has long been a critic of the Bush administration's aggressive policy of unilateralism, arguing that "U.S. leadership is determined as much by our commitment to principle as by our exercise of power." "A Republican Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2004.

[30] In an interview with the German newspaper *Die Welt* last summer, Bernard Lewis, a Princeton professor emeritus and a widely cited authority on the Middle East, said, "Europe will be part of the Arab west, the Maghreb. Migration and demography indicate this. Europeans marry late and have few or no children. But there's strong immigration: Turks in Germany, Arabs in France and Pakistanis in England. They marry early and have many children. Following current trends, Europe will have Muslim majorities in the population by the end of the 21st century at the latest." "Europa wird am Ende des Jahrhunderts islamisch sein," *Die Welt*, July 28, 2004.

[31] In 2004, even as military planners contemplated the possibility of pre-emptive strikes, there was still no long-term U.S. strategy for dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions, and at least one analyst feared that the United States might already have missed its chance to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. "U.S. Debates Military Strikes on 'Nuclear Iran,'" *Financial Times*, September 16, 2004.

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units attacked Saudi tankers. The result of all this was quite unsettling, both to regional stability and to the U.S. economy. World oil prices spiked to $81 a barrel, before falling back to $72 a month later.

Then, on the day before Thanksgiving, Hizbollah, the Iraqi Shia militia, and special operatives of Iran's elite Qods ("Jerusalem") Force acted.[32] (They no doubt chose that day because it was then still a relatively heavy travel day in America.) "Stinger Day," as it came to be known, did not actually involve Stinger missiles, as originally thought. Rather, the missiles were SA-14s and SA-16s stolen from Iraqi army stockpiles way back in 2003, after the U.S. invasion. The United States had failed to secure the Iraqi weapons depots, giving terrorists an opportunity to help themselves to Saddam Hussein's guns, explosives, and missiles. The missiles were later smuggled across the Canadian border into Minnesota, Washington, and Montana.[33]

SA-14s and SA-16s are much like Stingers, heat-seeking and easily portable. The four missile strikes that succeeded that day (in Atlanta, Chicago, Miami, and Los Angeles) were all aimed at 767s. The death toll was nearly 1,200, including those who died on the ground where the aircraft crashed. There is some dispute about whether three or four additional attempts failed in other cities. The most widely reported incident involved the killing by New Jersey state police officers of two Lebanese Hizbollah members who had been discovered sitting in a car with an SA-14 on a police ramp over I-95 next to Newark International.

Scarcely six years after 9/11 had briefly shut down commercial aviation and driven several major airlines into bankruptcy, the same thing occurred again. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were stranded for days that weekend. The Air Line Pilots Association refused to allow its members to return to the skies until all U.S. aircraft had been equipped with defenses against surface-to-air missiles, such as the ones used by Israel's air fleet.[34] Airline executives halted flights until troops had been deployed along all the takeoff and landing corridors at airports. Even then few people flew. In truth, the "legacy carriers," those airlines left over from the days when the industry was federally regulated, such as Delta, US Airways, and United, would probably have failed anyway. They already had crushing debt, and had been in and out of bankruptcy since 9/11. Their basic economic model (relying on outdated "hub and spoke" systems) was flawed, and they lacked the versatility of the regional carriers. In any event, having exhausted all federal loan guarantees and direct bailout packages, the remaining legacy airlines were closed down and broken up.

The emergency program to develop infrared countermeasures for civilian passenger aircraft is one of the best examples of America's using its high-tech advantage to battle the terrorists.[35] The IRCMs were produced at a cost of less than $2 million per aircraft, and 2,000 were installed (at taxpayer expense) before the next Thanksgiving rolled around. Today we have almost 4,000 in place on the two new major U.S. airlines that have supplanted the old carriers. It has taken four years, but travelers are slowly returning to the air.

The U.S. bombers that struck Iran had been refueled from and then landed in Saudi Arabia. This gave fundamentalist forces in that country the spark and the distraction they needed to finally stage a coup against the regime, which they did in August. The coup succeeded, and the House of Saud was driven out, at which point the price of oil reached the vicinity of $85 a barrel and stayed there.

The Saudi coup marked one of the worst U.S. intelligence failures in years. We were caught off guard because we had not been able to effectively collect intelligence

[32] A recent study of terrorist organizations by the RAND Corporation identified Hizbollah as one of the three most significant threats to the United States (along with al-Qaeda and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), because of its strong antipathy toward the country and its ability to launch sophisticated attacks. Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly, "The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World," RAND MR-1782-AF, 2004.

[33] Man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) are short-range surface-to-air missile systems designed for use by one or two soldiers to attack aircraft. Since the 1950s twenty countries have developed and produced MANPADS, and 500,000 to 750,000 weapons are believed to be in the worldwide inventory today. Their portability, ease of use and concealment, and low cost make them attractive to terrorists. The U.S. government estimates that a few thousand currently lie outside state control and that thousands more may be vulnerable to theft and transfer to terrorist groups because of inadequate physical security, inventory controls, and national export standards. Thousands of MANPADS may have been provided to Iraqi security forces or stolen during hostilities immediately following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, possibly doubling the number of MANPADS on the black and gray markets. Colin Powell has said that "no threat is more serious to aviation" than these weapons. "Nonproliferation: Further Improvements Needed in U.S. Efforts to Counter Threats From Man-Portable Air Defense Systems." GAO-04-519, May 13, 2004. Also "U.S. Expands List of Lost Missiles," *New York Times*, November 6, 2004.

[34] The cost of fully outfitting U.S. airframes with countermeasures against surface-to-air missiles is estimated at $50–$100 billion over twenty years. "Airline Protection Advances in House," *Washington Times*, April 30, 2004. Also "Aviation Security," GAO-04-728, June 4, 2004.

[35] In October 2003 the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Division initiated the Counter-MANPADS Program, to adapt current military countermeasure technology for civilian aircraft. The Directed Infrared Countermeasure, a technology currently used in the military's Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasure system, uses a high-intensity modulated laser beam to defeat the threat missile's guidance system. It is difficult to adapt the technology for civilian use, however, partly because maintenance and logistical infrastructure costs are prohibitive and false-alarm rates are high. "Fact Sheet: Countering Missile Threats to Commercial Aircraft," DHS, January 6, 2004.

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inside "the kingdom," as it was then called. We relied on the Saudi Ministry of the Interior to tell us how strong the *jihadis* were, and whether there was serious opposition to the king. As it turned out, opposition was widespread, even among the royal family and the Saudi National Guard that had been created to protect it.[36]

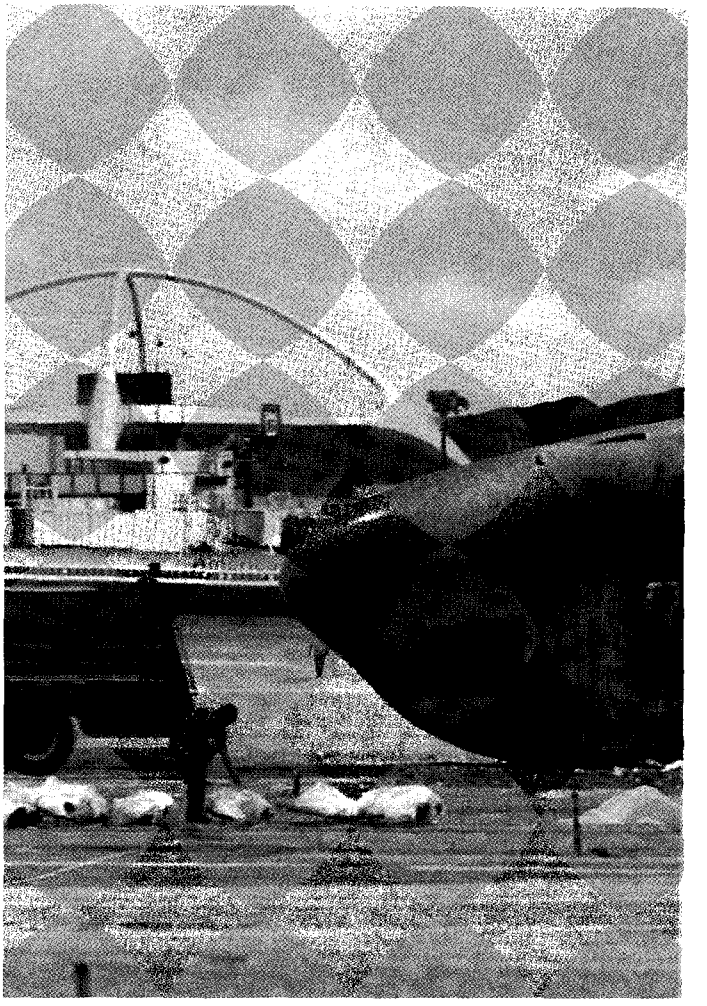
The main stimulus for the coup probably came from the many Saudis who had returned from neighboring Iraq, where they had been radicalized by their experiences fighting the U.S. occupation. Osama bin Laden's final, pre-death request, captured on video and broadcast worldwide on al-Jazeera and other media networks, was that the royal family be deposed. It unexpectedly unified a variety of Saudi dissident groups.

By dawn on the third day of the coup the surviving members of the House of Saud had fled or were in prison, the oil fields were in the hands of troops loyal to the ruling clerics, and all foreigners were being rounded up and escorted to the airports or the borders. Iraq was the first country to acknowledge the new government. Other Gulf states soon followed.

Had the United States welcomed the new government, which we now know as Islamiyah, the effect on the world oil market might have been different. Instead we cut off the flow of spare parts needed to maintain the billions of dollars' worth of high-tech arms we had sold to the Saudis throughout the 1980s and 1990s; we also withdrew the U.S. contractors who knew how to make the systems work. Naturally, the new regime responded by canceling all oil contracts between U.S. firms and Saudi Arabia's national oil company. The company made up much of what it had lost in dumping the U.S. contracts by signing new long-term deals with China; recent economic growth had raised China's demand for overseas oil to about the level of America's, which had been depressed by economic stagnation.[37] The dislocation in the world oil supply was short-lived, but it was a cold winter in the northern United States that year.

[36] Over the course of the past eighty years, particularly during the height of Nasserism and pan-Arabism in the 1950s and the reaction against oil-wealth-generated modernization in the 1970s, the Saudi monarchy has at various times faced challenges from Islamic extremists and from secular movements supported by other Arab states. Since the 1990s hard-line opposition groups—some inspired by Osama bin Laden—have re-emerged in response to the American presence on Saudi soil. The Saudi government has done relatively little to track the thousands of young Saudis who have passed through terrorist training camps, or to disrupt the flow of money to extremist groups, or to suppress the spread of radical ideology. Until the attacks on a housing compound in Riyadh on May 12, 2003, the Saudi government had viewed terrorism largely as an external problem rather than a threat to national security. Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, "Saudi National Security: Military and Security Services—Challenges and Developments," Center for Strategic and International Studies, working draft, May 30, 2004.

[37] "At 5.5 million barrels a day," according to a recent ABC News report, "China is already the world's second-largest consumer of oil, behind the United States, and it has the fastest-growing appetite for more. Oil feeds the factories that have turned it into a manufacturing powerhouse, making 50 percent of the world's cameras and 30 percent of its air conditioners and TVs." A report by the International Energy Agency predicts that Chinese oil imports will equal current U.S. imports by 2030. "A Closer Look Behind the Price," ABC News, May 26, 2004. Also "World Energy Outlook 2004," International Energy Agency, October 2004.



The real economic effect of the oil-price increase didn't hit until the last quarter of the year. Still, 2007 ended with U.S. unemployment at 15 percent and GDP down again. The "good news," as the president pointed out in his Christmas message, was that because rail and air travel had been so heavily curtailed, and because fewer people were hanging out at shopping malls, and because many "destination venues" remained closed, Americans were spending more time together as families.

2008: ELECTION YEAR AND VIRTUAL WAR

Iran's hostile reaction to the U.S. bombing continued into 2008 and made use of Hizbollah allies. (Hizbollah, although composed largely of Palestinians and Lebanese, was created in the 1980s by Iran, which closely controlled it for more than twenty years.) Iran also employed its Qods Force, the covert arm of its Revolutionary Guards.

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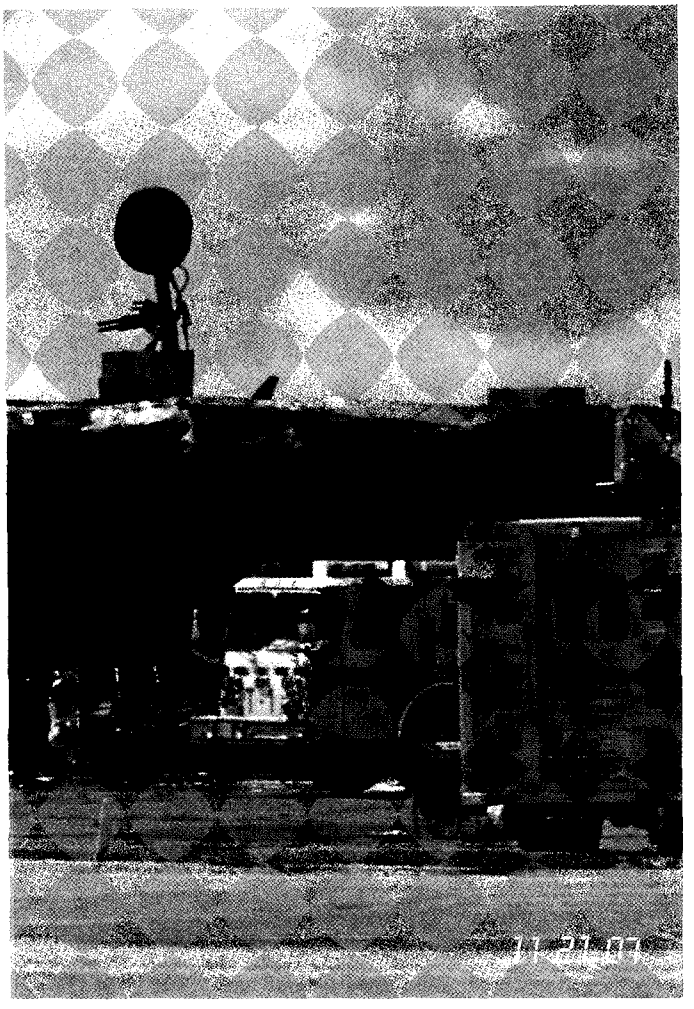

American counterterrorism specialists had always feared Hizbollah and the Qods Force, because their "tradescraft" was so superior to that of other terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda and its many progeny. Diplomats and military leaders had for years used numerous back channels to keep both groups on the sidelines while we engaged in counterterrorist warfare. Our overt attack on Iran brought their full power to bear on our citizenry, with tragic results.

Working with the remnants of al-Qaeda, the Iranians staged a significant cyberattack in the United States during the 2008 election year. Reliance on cyberspace for retail had, of course, increased significantly after the many mall closings. More important, America had been using cyberspace to control its critical infrastructure since the late 1990s. Electrical-power grids, gas pipelines, train networks, and banking and financial markets all depended on computer-controlled systems connected to the Internet. President Bill Clinton had acknowledged this dependence and vulnerability in a 1998 presidential directive. President Bush had articulated the National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace in 2003, but he had done little to implement it.[38] Meanwhile, many nations created information-warfare units and did surveillance on U.S. networks.[39] Iran was one of those nations.

The cyberattack began with a "Zero Day worm," a piece of self-propagating software that exploited a hitherto unknown vulnerability in a widely used computer operating system.[40] The worm bypassed computer firewalls and placed applets on companies' networks. The applets sent back covert messages describing what kind of network they had penetrated. Then, all at once, the worms erased the operating systems on key computers throughout the United States, and in their place installed a program that caused the computers to repeatedly reboot whenever they were turned on. Freight trains stopped. Nuclear-power plants shut down. Banks and brokerage houses froze. In some cities the emergency-call systems crashed; in others traffic lights shut off.[41]

Then, as cybersecurity teams were attempting to figure out what had happened, a second worm penetrated the operating system of the most widely used routers on U.S. computer networks. Once inside, the worm found the routing tables, called border gateway protocols, that told Internet traffic where to go. It scrambled the tables so that packets were lost in cyberspace. Confused by the traffic errors, many of the routers exceeded their processing capabilities and collapsed.

The stock market closed, as did the commodities markets. Major hospitals canceled all but emergency surgeries and procedures. Three major power grids experienced brownouts. Police and state militia units were ordered into

[38] In a letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge dated March 19, 2004, Senator Joseph Lieberman criticized the Bush administration for failing to move beyond the vague generalities outlined in the National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace and implement concrete plans to protect information systems from cyberattacks. Meanwhile, Internet-industry officials believe that the government's neglect of cybersecurity has led to rapid turnover in the position of director of the National Cyber Security Division, part of the Department of Homeland Security. "Top U.S. Cyber-Security Official Resigns," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2004.

[39] China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Libya, Syria, India, Cuba, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom all are reportedly developing their information-warfare capabilities. The Pentagon's 2003 assessment of China's military potential noted "an unusual emphasis on a host of new information warfare forces," including "a corps of 'network warriors.'" "Cyberwarfare," CRS, RL30735, June 19, 2001. Also "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China," Department of Defense, July 28, 2003.

[40] Zero Day worms, viruses, and other electronic "exploits" have already attacked military and civilian computer systems in the United States. Vulnerability to such attacks persists. "Blindsided," *Government Executive*, May 1, 2004. Also "Computer Attack and Cyber Terrorism: Vulnerabilities and Policy Issues for Congress." Also CRS, October 17, 2003.

[41] The increased reliance on computers to monitor and control telecommunications, power distribution, water supply, and public-health and emergency services, combined with the adoption of standardized technologies (such as Microsoft's Windows) and the widespread availability of technical information, has put these control systems at greater risk of attack. "Critical Infrastructure Protection: Challenges in Securing Control Systems," GAO-04-140T, October 1, 2003.

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the cities to maintain order and minimize looting. Millions of Americans, now staring at blank computer screens, were sent home from work.

The already reeling economy took another hit. The U.S. software industry was hurt the most. As a result open-source software, which had already spread widely in Europe and Asia, now dominates U.S. servers, routers, and desktops. The "free" software movement badly hurt revenues at several U.S. firms. Intervention by the new Federal Cyber Security Service, through its monitoring of all Internet traffic, has since somewhat reduced the prevalence of worms and viruses. Although some Americans complained about loss of privacy, others noted the benefits, such as a significant reduction in the volume of spam e-mail.

State and local police forces, state militias, Homeland Security Department personnel, and private guards now protected airports, the neighborhoods around them, train stations, the tracks connecting them, shopping malls, and U.S. borders. By the middle of 2008 there were 220,000 more such security officers than there had been in 2000. The armed forces had grown by 215,000 during the same period. Yet these new jobs hardly put a dent in unemployment, which hovered at 16 percent as the election approached.

During the campaign the two major parties had attempted to outdo each other in their anti-terror fervor. The similarity of their hawkish strategies helped give rise to an influential third party, the American Liberty Party, which challenged the Patriot Acts. San Francisco's mayor, a Chinese-American woman, surprised the experts by garnering 12 percent of the popular vote for the presidency on a platform built almost exclusively on shoring up civil liberties. Two new governors were elected on the American Liberty ticket, as were fourteen congressmen, who became a vocal minority in the new Congress.

2009: "NUKE SQUADS" AND THE NEW DRAFT

The Homeland Protection and Service Act of 2009 could not have been introduced in an election year. It was controversial when the president proposed it, in his 2009 State of the Union address, and, frankly, remains so today. Had he proposed it in 2008, it is likely that the American Liberty Party would have roused even more support than it did. The "new draft," as its opponents have labeled it, is different in important respects from earlier conscriptions in U.S. history. Conscripts are randomly selected and may serve any two consecutive years, as long as their service begins before age twenty-two. Most draftees are given monitoring or first-responder jobs here at home; few are required to go through weapons training. Despite these differences from Vietnam-era conscription, draft dodging and AWOLs have already become such a large problem that the U.S. Marshals have created special squads to hunt down recalcitrants and force them back into service.

The act also included funding for special federal courts (which would operate in secret, to protect the judges and lawyers involved) to determine whether U.S. citizens, resident aliens, and illegal aliens detained on suspicion of terrorist activity should be treated as POWs or as enemy combatants. Recognizing how long it would take for the government to process the increasing number of detainees, Congress authorized the detention of suspected terrorists for up to three years without a hearing, subject to review every six months by the attorney general.

Meanwhile, the attorney general worried openly about the threat from those terrorists who were not yet known to the government and did not appear on any watch lists: freshly arrived illegal immigrants, members of sleeper cells, and new religious converts. He conceded that capturing these people before they committed acts of terror was next to impossible. Announcing that the Department of Justice would crack down on Islamic prayer in prisons, he instructed the authorities to track released prisoners thought to have converted to Islamic fundamentalism. Al-Qaeda and its imitators did not have to work hard to make converts within the U.S. prison system. A disproportionate majority of the prison population was nonwhite. Radical Islamists preached to these prisoners that the society that had imprisoned them should be made to pay.[42]

Shortly after his inauguration the president announced that U.S. intelligence had detected plans by Iran and Hizbollah to bring nuclear weapons into the United States in retaliation for the U.S. bombing of Iran.[43] He announced the Safe Sea Approaches Program, which required all ships within 200 nautical miles of the U.S. coast to broadcast on a satellite frequency, squawking their location, name, departure and destination ports, and cargo. Ships not complying would be intercepted and might be sunk. In the first months of the program only one ship, a small Yemeni-flagged oil tanker bound for a refinery in Trinidad, was sunk, by a U.S. attack submarine 120 miles off Puerto Rico, causing limited environmental damage.

The Safe Sea effort also aimed to replace the entire global inventory of shipping containers with smart ship-

[42] A recent Justice Department report suggests that there are few safeguards against the propagation of Muslim extremism in federal prisons. Fundamentalist Islamic inmates are converting fellow prisoners to radicalism, and at times urging them to overthrow the U.S. government. "A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers," Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, April 2004.

[43] The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 identified vulnerabilities in the nation's ports and waterways, the routes by which an illicit nuclear weapon might arrive. The Coast Guard has worked with facilities and vessels to implement security plans, but the task may be too big to complete in time. "Maritime Security: Substantial Work Remains to Translate New Planning Requirements Into Effective Port Security," GAO-04-838, June 30, 2004. Also Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe*, Times Books, 2004.

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ping units.[44] SSUs contain sensors that automatically and continuously transmit information about the contents of the containers from the moment they are sealed until they are opened. The Department of Homeland Security deployed 12,000 U.S. customs inspectors in overseas ports to ensure that the SSUs were not tampered with and to keep any non-SSU containers off U.S.-bound ships. Radiation portals and imaging equipment were also installed in foreign ports and shipping depots, providing real-time images of every container's contents as the container was loaded into a ship or a truck bound for America.

Concerned that Iran had already slipped nuclear weapons into the country, the Department of Homeland Security greatly expanded its nuclear search-and-disarmament teams, or "nuke squads," as they became known. Under an amendment to Patriot Act III the nuke squads were empowered to search "anywhere, anytime," with Geiger counters and other devices that could detect gamma rays and neutron flux. The squads regularly raided self-storage facilities and set up checkpoints at weigh stations on interstate highways. Initially, federal courts differed on whether other illegal materials found in these searches could be used as a basis for arrests; the Supreme Court ultimately ruled that searches for nuclear weapons did not require a warrant, and that any incriminating material found in the course of such a search could be used as evidence in court.

When Canada refused to allow U.S. nuke squads to conduct warrantless searches at customs stations on the Canadian side of the border, we built the Northern Wall, which channeled trucks and freight trains to a limited number of monitored border crossings. Barbed wire, radar installations, and thousands of security workers made our border with Canada resemble our border with Mexico.[45]

The quick and thorough response to the threat of smuggled Iranian nuclear weapons was successful. Iran was evidently deterred, and no terrorist nuclear weapons have ever been found in the United States or en route to it.[46]

2010: Using Our Own Chemicals Against Us

It had been three years since a terrorist bomb had been detonated on U.S. soil when executive jets packed with explosives slammed into chlorine-gas facilities in New Jersey and Delaware. Fortunately, in New Jersey much of the potential gas cloud was consumed by the flames of the initial explosion, and winds sent what remained of the plume over a largely uninhabited area. Delaware, however, was less fortunate: the poisonous cloud produced by the explosion left 1,500 dead and 4,000 injured, some as a result of panic during the evacuation of the Wilmington area.[47]

Both al-Qaeda and Hizbollah claimed responsibility for the attacks on the chemical plants, although Iran condemned them and offered assistance to the affected communities. Investigation into the attacks is still officially ongoing. The United States has not yet retaliated, and the Pentagon is reported to have recommended against a retaliatory bombing of a nuclear-armed Iran. (The president has publicly denied that the Pentagon made any such recommendation, and points out that we bombed Iran as recently as 2007.)

Although the deaths in Delaware did not result from terrorist use of a chemical weapon, they nonetheless highlighted the dangers of a chemical attack and led directly to the issuing of gas masks to all citizens in metropolitan areas and rural counties with chemical plants or refineries. The masks were sound despite their mass production, but improper training caused some deaths from suffocation or coronary arrest during practice exercises.

Heavy lobbying by the chemical industry in the years following 9/11 had prevented any congressional regulation that would have imposed terrorism-specific security requirements or standards on chemical plants near large municipalities. Some reports claimed that the Bush administration had tried to undermine the Environmental Protection Agency by relaxing the system for evaluating plant security, in order to

[44] Today most containers are secured by a passive seal that indicates when there has been tampering but does not prevent access to the contents. Such seals are easily circumvented. Standardizing seals and containers and installing electronic systems to monitor a container's status would greatly increase security throughout the transport chain. Maarten van de Voort et al., "'Seacurity': Improving the Security of the Global Sea-Container Shipping System," RAND, MR-1695-JRC, 2003.

[45] Not that our southern border is particularly secure: currently no strategy exists for comprehensively monitoring all 1,933 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border around the clock. Technology is used erratically, and most of the seismic, magnetic, and thermal sensors deployed along the border are more than twenty-five years old and require constant maintenance. Integrated surveillance systems, which use both ground sensors and cameras linked to a central command center, have recently been installed, but they cover only a portion of the border. The Tethered Aerostat Radar System is a set of six high-altitude balloons anchored over the border that identify low-flying aircraft. When TARS is inoperable because of bad weather, P-3 airplanes flown by the Office of Air and Marine Operations provide live radar and video feeds of activity along the border. The Border Patrol has also deployed unmanned aerial vehicles that use night-vision equipment. "Transforming the Southern Border," House Select Committee on Homeland Security, September 2004.

[46] A nuclear attack on the United States is, along with the threat of a biological attack, the most frightening possibility to contemplate. Although developing and using even a crude nuclear weapon would be extremely difficult for terrorists, it is far from impossible, and the United States remains poorly prepared to defend against a nuclear attack. Matthew Bunn and Anthony Wier, *Securing the Bomb: An Agenda for Action*, Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University, May 2004. Also Graham Allison, op. cit.

[47] A recent study conducted by the New York Academy of Medicine found that two fifths of Americans would fail to follow civil-defense orders properly in the event of a biological attack. Roz D. Lasker, "Redefining Readiness: Terrorism Planning Through the Eyes of the Public," New York Academy of Medicine, September 14, 2004.

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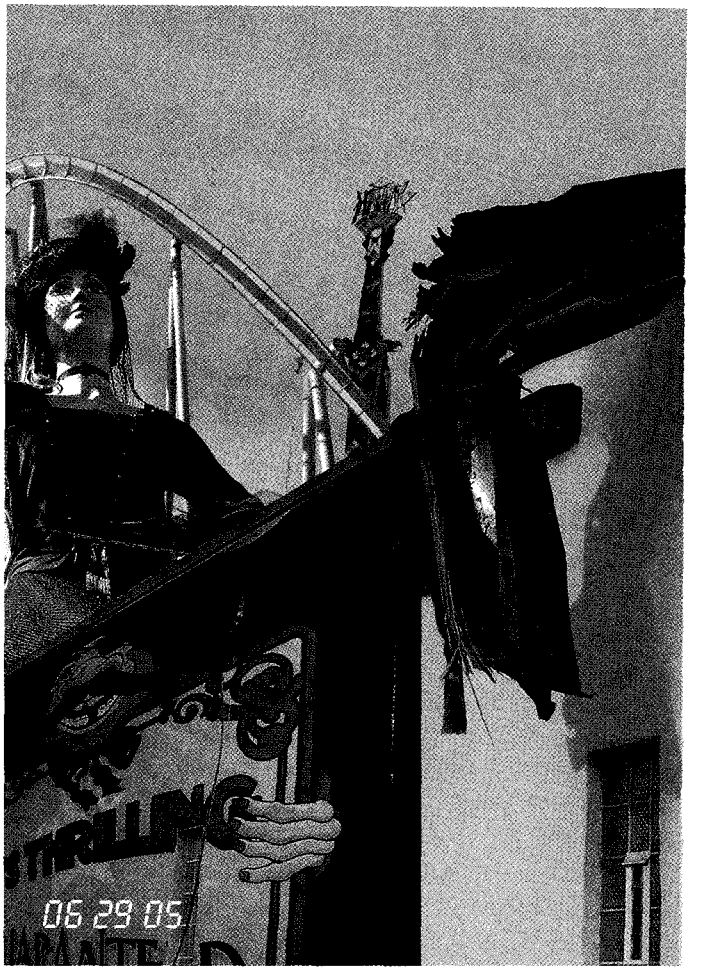
reduce the number of facilities deemed high-risk.[48] Indeed, both the facilities that were attacked had at one point been on the EPA's high-risk list but were not on the Bush administration's. Therefore they never underwent the security upgrades that a more severe risk assessment might possibly have induced. Outrage at this realization led to substantial new regulations and security requirements for private chemical and nuclear plants. Whereas the federal government might once have helped fund and carry out these improvements, the economic situation now placed the burden on companies and state militias. Money was drying up.

2011: WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY

Nine months into this year we have so far been spared any new terrorist attacks on our soil. Of course there have been incidents at our embassies and some U.S.-owned hotels overseas, as there have been nearly every year for more than a decade, but they have produced few U.S. casualties.

Some believe that the *jihadi* movement has lost its fervor. Others believe that with *jihadi* governments holding power in the former Saudi Arabia and in Pakistan, as well as in large parts of Iraq and Afghanistan, the terrorists are now too busy governing to be planning further assaults. I think the real reason for the diminished number of attacks is that the United States has hardened itself. We have greatly reduced our overseas profile, generally limiting our presence to highly secure embassies. It has become extremely difficult for people or cargo to get into or out of the United States without extensive inspection. The number of security workers per capita within America's borders is now higher than in any other country, including long-embattled Israel. A would-be terrorist knows that his communications can easily be monitored and his vehicles and facilities searched with little provocation. If suspicious materials are found, or if an informant provides a potential lead, suspected terrorists can be held for an extensive period of time pending investigation. All this has made it more difficult to carry out attacks on U.S. soil. Of course, it has also hurt us in world trade, swelled our national debt, and depressed our GDP.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of 9/11 and the launch



of our global war on terror, it is hard for many Americans to remember when the sight of police officers with automatic weapons and body armor was rare. Yet it wasn't so long ago that we could enter a shopping mall, a train station, an airport, or a public building without "see-through scanners" and explosive-sniffers. The use of SIDs is now so routine that we can hardly believe we ever did without them. For all the additional security these developments have afforded us, however, they have also produced a powerful political backlash. Polls show that the American Liberty Party may draw up to a third of the popular vote in the campaign next year.

Could the global war on terror have played out differently?

If the war had been restricted to eliminating al-Qaeda in the two years following 9/11, it is possible that the first generation might have been suppressed before al-Qaeda metastasized into a multi-group *jihadi* movement. In 2002 especially, we squandered opportunities to unite the global community in a successful counterterrorism effort. If we had initially sent a more substantial U.S. force to Afghanistan, bin Laden might have been killed in the first few weeks of the war, perhaps preventing many of the attacks that took place around the world in the following three years.

Had we not invaded Iraq, many of the *jihadis* we know today would never have been recruited to the terrorists'

[48] The EPA and the DHS have done separate threat analyses showing that between two (the DHS's estimate) and 123 (the EPA's estimate) of the nation's chemical plants pose a risk to the lives of more than a million people. Current federal requirements to reduce risks at chemical facilities are based on the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 and the Clean Air Act of 1990. But neither law explicitly addresses chemical release due to criminal or terrorist acts. Proposals now pending before Congress would require vulnerability assessments, reduce the amount of information available to the public about security at chemical facilities, and increase funding for security at those facilities. "Chemical Plant Security," CRS, RL31530, January 20, 2004. Also "Chemical Plants Still Have Few Terror Controls," *Wall Street Journal*, August 20, 2004.

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cause. Not invading Iraq would also have freed up money for earlier investments in domestic security: for instance, upgrades for chemical plants, trains, container shipping, and computer networks. Because we developed most such protective measures too late, panicking under political pressure, we too often used brute-force methods that were costly, intrusive, and less effective than we hoped. With more time, money, and careful consideration, the body politic might have persuaded the private sector to join the federal government in a real partnership to enhance the security of critical infrastructure. More important, we would have been better able to carry on an open national dialogue about the tradeoffs between security and civil liberties, and about the ways in which strong civil liberties and strong domestic security can be mutually reinforcing.

Perhaps, too, we could have followed the proposal of the 9/11 Commission and engaged the Islamic world in a true battle of ideas. Indeed, if we had not from the start adopted tactics and rhetoric that cast the war on terror as a new "Crusade," as a struggle of good versus evil, we might have been able to achieve more popular support in the Islamic world. Our attempts to change Islamic opinion with an Arabic-language satellite-television news station and an Arabic radio station carrying rock music were simply not enough. We talked about replacing the hate-fostering madrassahs with modern educational programs, but we never succeeded in making that happen. Nor did we successfully work behind the scenes with our Muslim friends to create an ideological counterweight to the *jihadis*. Although we talked hopefully about negotiated outcomes to the Palestinian conflict and the struggle in Chechnya, neither actually came to pass. Because we were afraid to "reward bad behavior," we let Iranian nuclear-weapons development get too far along, to the point where our only option was to attack Iran. This set back the Iranian democratic reform movement and added Hizbollah to our list of active enemies.

Although we occasionally lectured Arab states about the need for democracy and reform, we never developed a country-by-country program, or provided practical steps for moving theocracies and autocracies in that direction. Moreover, our haranguing Arab governments to be nicer to their citizens ended up producing a backlash against us, because our exhortations were seen as hypocritical in view of our bombing, torture, and occupation tactics in Iraq.

It can still be debated whether we accelerated the fall of the House of Saud with our arrogant tactics. The almost total lack of intelligence about what was going on in Saudi Arabia before the revolution did, however, make it hard for U.S. policymakers to develop sound strategies.

Despite years of earnest-sounding talk about "energy independence" and weaning ourselves from our addiction to foreign oil, no president since Jimmy Carter in the 1970s has ever seemed serious about these goals. We never developed truly fuel-efficient vehicles, so our foreign energy imports drastically harm the economy when oil prices soar.

As early as 2004 our nation's leaders were admitting that the war on terror would probably last a generation or more, even as they continued to argue among themselves about whether it could *ever* truly be won. If they had acted differently—sooner, smarter—we might have been able to contain what were at one time just a few radical *jihadis*, and to raise our defenses more effectively. Instead our leaders made the clash of cultures a self-fulfilling prophecy, turning the first part of the twenty-first century into an ongoing low-grade war between religions that made America less wealthy, less confident, and certainly less free.[49]

[49] *Author's note*: This scenario is intentionally very bad but not worst-case. (A nuclear or biological attack would be the worst case.) The purpose of this article is to suggest that there are still opportunities to avoid such disasters without sacrificing our liberties, if we act now. Finally, for those who may say that this has given the terrorists recipes and road maps for how to attack us, here's a bit of bad news: the terrorists already know in much greater detail how best to attack us again.

Richard A. Clarke was the national coordinator for security and counterterrorism for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, and is the author of Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror. *Bridger McGaw assisted him with this article. The accompanying illustrations are photo collages composed by John Ritter using parts of news photos (courtesy of AP Photo) in combination with the artist's own.*

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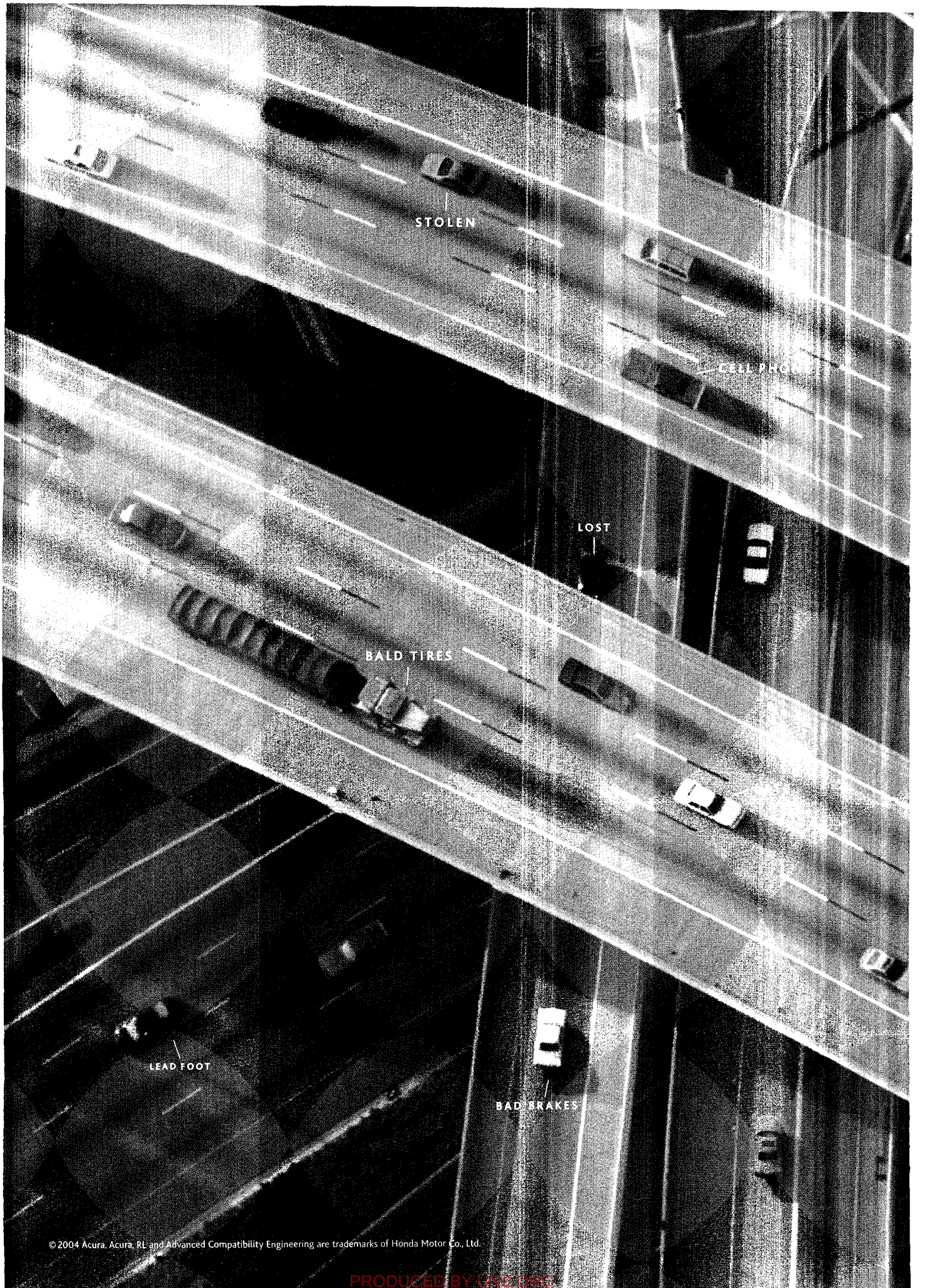

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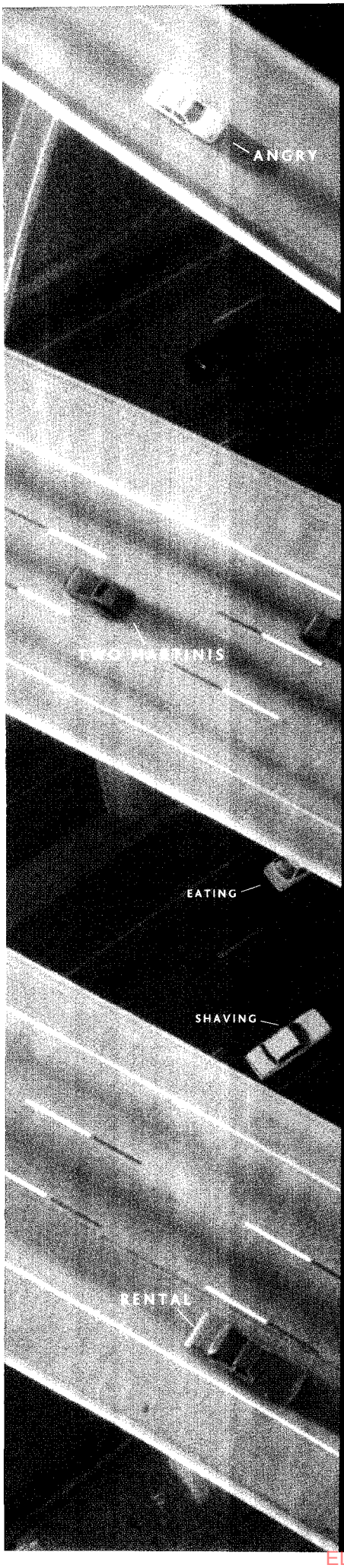

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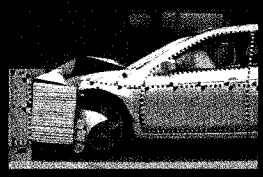

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SUCCESS WITHOUT VICTORY

America won the Cold War because Americans embraced a set of strategic principles and pursued them steadily, decade after decade. Here's the outline of a "containment" strategy for the age of terror

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Photomontage by John Ritter

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The first person I heard discuss the terrorist threat to America was a man named Brian Michael Jenkins. This was back in 1978, at a conference in Berlin. At the time, people who thought about defense mainly thought about the Soviet nuclear arsenal or the aftereffects of Vietnam.

Yet at this conference Jenkins, then in his mid-thirties and a scholar at the RAND Corporation, explained that even a power as fearsome as the Soviet Union might not be the worst threat to the United States and its allies in the long run. "We are approaching an age in which national governments may no longer monopolize the instruments of major destruction," he said. "The instruments of warfare once possessed only by armies will be available to gangs. It will not be possible to satisfy the real or imagined grievances of all the little groups that will be capable of large-scale disruption and destruction, or to defend everyone against them ... In the future, warfare—highly destructive warfare—may be waged without the necessity for armies and governments, by people with little to lose."

When I came across notes from that conference recently, Jenkins's comments drew my attention in a way they hadn't the first time around. I mention them here less to establish his prescience (he had made similar arguments in a 1975 book) than to illustrate how long he has been thinking about the subject. For most of the past thirty years he has worked as an anti-terrorism expert in the government, at RAND, and in a private risk-consulting firm. He looks nothing at all like the former governor Jesse Ventura or the former deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage—two bald, burly, aggressive-sounding veterans of U.S. Navy training. But Jenkins, who is lanky and elegantly dressed and roughly resembles the actor Roy Scheider, is a former Army Green Beret who served during the invasion of the Dominican Republic and in Vietnam; as with Ventura and Armitage, I have felt when seeing Jenkins every few years that it would not be surprising to find him crawling under barbed wire with a dagger in his teeth.

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

In short, Jenkins is no softie. But when I spoke with him a few days after the presidential election, he lamented the meaningless tough talk about terrorism that he had heard from both candidates. Among his colleagues in the anti-terror and counterinsurgency business, he said, "there is a recognition that we have to get beyond just shooting terrorists." They understand that this struggle will be with us for a very long time, that success will mean reducing rather than absolutely eliminating the threat of attacks, and that because there is no enemy government or army to surrender, there can be no clear-cut moment of victory. "Ironically, when President Bush said this in the campaign, he was immediately jumped upon," Jenkins said. "It was a moment of truth for which he was promptly punished. Senator Kerry had a similar moment, when he said that the objective was to reduce terrorism to no more than a nuisance. Conceptually that was quite accurate, even if it was not the most felicitous choice of words. And he was punished too. In a campaign with a great deal of nonsense about the threat of terrorism, these two moments of truth were mightily punished, and the candidates had to back away and revert to the more superficial and less supportable assertions."

Superficial or make-believe political discourse is not the fundamental problem in some areas of public life. Take Iraq: America's main challenge is not that people are reluctant to discuss their good ideas for speedy progress toward a stable society and a quick removal of U.S. troops. It is that good ideas don't exist. But after spending a long time listening to, talking with, and reading about people in the United States and elsewhere who are involved in the struggle to control terrorism, I think that in this area our constrained public discourse *is* much of the problem.

Good ideas about coping with terrorism do exist. They are available practically by the metric ton. My desk groans beneath the reports from high-level federal commissions alone. Most recently there was the 9/11 Commission, but before that came the Deutch Commission and the Gilmore Commission and the Bremer

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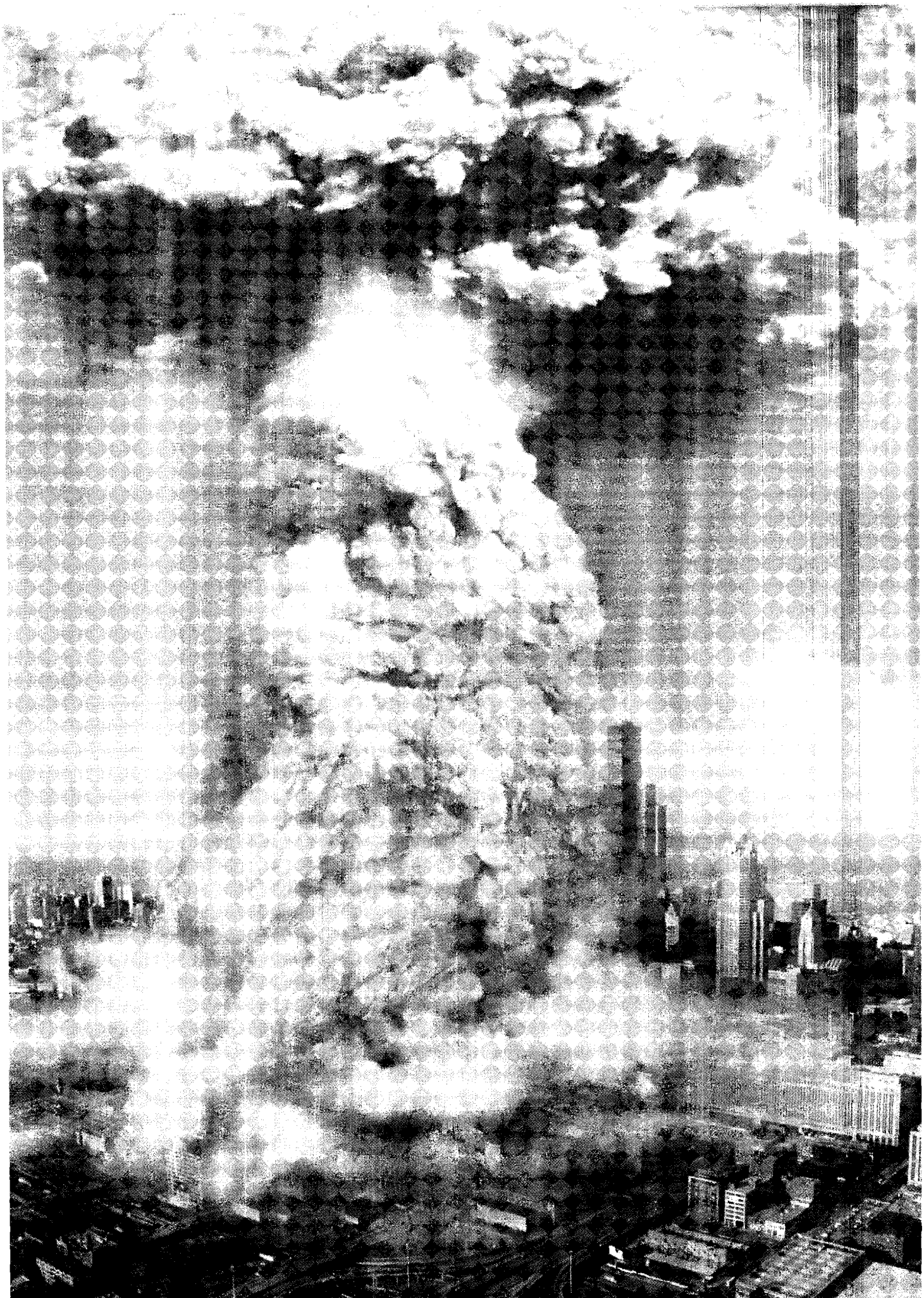

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Commission and the Hart-Rudman Commission. Just after George W. Bush took office this last group warned that America's big challenge in the years ahead would be mass-casualty attacks on its cities. Americans who took the time to read some or all of these reports might not feel calmer about the world, but they would think that the studies represent public money well spent. And the commission reports are just the beginning. Late last year the Century Foundation released *Defeating the Jihadists*, by the former chief of White House anti-terror efforts, Richard Clarke, which included a sweeping list of recommendations. The war colleges, the Council on Foreign Relations, scholars in the political-science and public-policy departments of most major universities, and numerous independent researchers have all published books or monographs containing detailed action plans.

The problem really is not the lack of sensible answers. It is the reluctance to present them. In public it is hard for politicians to say things their backers don't already agree with. Yet doing just that constitutes leadership, and a re-elected president has a chance to demonstrate leadership—in this case by laying out the hard truths that people waging this struggle clearly understand.

For instance: This "war" will never be over, unlike the Civil War, the Vietnam War, or even the current war in Iraq. There will always be a threat that someone will blow up an airplane or a building or a container ship. Technology has changed the balance of power; it is easier for even a handful of people to threaten a community than it is for the community to defend itself. But while we have to live in danger, we don't have to live in fear. Attacks are designed to frighten us even more than to kill us. So let's refuse to magnify the damage they do. We'll talk about the risk only when that leads to specific ways we can make ourselves safer. Otherwise we'll just stop talking about it, as we do about the many other risks and tragedies inevitable in life. We will show that we are a free, brave people by controlling our fears. We admired Britain during the Blitz because people went about their lives rather than fretting at every minute that they might die. Let us be admirable in the same way.

In addition to being brave we have to be serious. We cannot waste any more time on make-believe. Make-believe includes arguing about whether our efforts should be like crime-fighting or war-fighting. They should be like both—and like a public-health campaign, a propaganda effort, and many other models that might prove useful. Make-believe involves measures that seem impressive but do not make us safer, such as national threat-level warnings and *pro forma* ID checks. The most damaging form of make-believe is the failure to distinguish between destructive but not annihilating kinds of attack we can never eliminate but can withstand and the two or three ways terrorist groups could actually put our national survival in jeopardy. We should talk less about terrorism in general and more about the few real dangers.

A full agenda for reducing harm from terrorism would fill many thousands of pages and encompass many hundreds of long-term action points. But a change of mind on just three points might help break the logjam. They involve the threats we try to defend against, the ideas we try to project, and the problems we act on first.

Homeland Security: Keep Your Shoes On

Screening lines at airports are perhaps the most familiar reminder of post-9/11 security. They also exemplify what's wrong with the current approach.

Many of the routines and demands are silly, eroding rather than building confidence in the security regime of which they are part. "You can't go through an airport line without thinking 'This is dumb,'" says Graham Allison, the author of the recent *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe*, and the director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, at Harvard, which conducts many projects on anti-terrorism and security. "You have the two people whose job is to see if the name on your driver's license is the same as the name on your ticket—as if any self-respecting terrorist would fail to think of that. You have the guy whose job is to shout out a reminder for you to take off your jacket and get your computer out of your bag. You've got one-year-olds taking off their shoes. It is hard to think of a way you could caricature it to make it look sillier." At the same time, the ritual manages to be intimidating, as a standing reminder of how much Americans have to fear.

The airport screening process is surprisingly expensive, directly costing the Transportation Security Administration more than $4 billion a year. According to the Air Transport Association, the airline trade group, U.S.-based airlines spend about that much again—$3.8 billion—in security fees and other direct and indirect costs such as free first-class seats for air marshals. For purposes of comparison, the airlines' total losses for 2004 are likely to be about $4 billion.

Are the measures worthwhile? They certainly reduce one specific danger: that a plane will be brought down by a shoe bomb or some other explosive device concealed in a passenger's clothes or carry-on luggage. But they probably make no difference in the odds of another 9/11-style attack, now that cockpit doors have been reinforced and passengers know they must not let a hijacker succeed. And they also do nothing to reduce the risk of explosions in the cargo hold, since most airborne cargo containers are not screened at all, even when carried on passenger airplanes.

In a larger sense, such extensive screening at airports may actually make America more vulnerable, because of all the things the Transportation Security Administration is neglecting to do as a result. The TSA has a total budget of some $5.3 billion—more than 80 percent of which goes to airport screening. Although there is some money for transportation security in other parts of the federal budget,

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the TSA, which is supposedly responsible for all modes of transportation, has well under $1 billion for everything except airlines: roads, bridges, subways, tunnels, railroads, ports, and other facilities through which most of the nation's people and commerce move. "Nobody can 'prove' that it's wrong to have so little left for ports and roads and railroads, because nobody has done the analysis," says Daniel Prieto, who has worked as an investment banker and as a staff member for the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, and is now at the Belfer Center. "There is no good guide to prioritize what to protect. But it sure doesn't *seem* right, when trucks account for 70 to 80 percent of all shipping in the United States; when terrorist attacks globally, like the Madrid bombing, show that land-based transportation targets are among the deadliest and most easily hit; and when experts view insecure ports and cargo containers as among the most likely means of WMD entering the United States." Marc Sageman, a former CIA case officer and the author of the book *Understanding Terror Networks*, says that with the disruption of its training bases and communications systems, al-Qaeda will find it harder to launch a complex 9/11-scale operation anytime soon. "The future is Madrids," he says—smaller, localized attacks that still do great damage.

Prieto argues that the roughly $4 billion now going strictly toward airline passengers could make Americans safer if it were applied more broadly in transportation—reinforcing bridges, establishing escape routes from tunnels, installing call boxes, mounting environmental sensors, screening more cargo. All these efforts combined now get less than $300 million a year, which will drop to $50 million next year.

Rationally, this is an easy tradeoff: less routine screening of passengers who don't call out for special attention (watch lists, travel and spending patterns, and other warning mechanisms can be improved), in exchange for more and faster work to reduce the vulnerabilities of bridges, tunnels, and ports. In wartime a commander would easily make such a decision to protect his troops. But politically this decision is almost impossible. Such a tradeoff would make it likelier that some airplane, somewhere, would be blown up. If that happened, whoever had recommended the change would be excoriated—even if more people had been spared equally gruesome fates in subways or near ports.

"Terrorism is simply too cheap, too available, and too tempting to ever be totally eradicated," says Stephen Flynn, the author of the recent book *America the Vulnerable*. Flynn is a former Coast Guard officer who has worked on the National Security Council and for the Hart-Rudman Commission. "What is required is that everyday citizens develop both the maturity to live with the risk of future attacks and the willingness to invest in reasonable measures to mitigate that risk." This point seems obvious, but so far it has escaped mention by our president or vice-president. Since the very point of terrorism is to distort our domestic life, the further we go in anti-terror measures, the more we do our enemies' work. For instance, the nation's capital has been turned into a bunker city. Visiting citizens can barely approach the White House or the Capitol. The damage on 9/11 was al-Qaeda's doing; much of the damage to normal life since then has been our choice.

"Who are the victims of terrorism?," Benjamin Friedman, a graduate student in political science at MIT, asked in the MIT publication *Breakthroughs* last year. "Those that the terrorists kill or maim and those that fear terrorism. Terrorism takes its name not from violence but from the emotion violence provokes. Terrorists are the enemy. So is fear ... If we are all afraid of terrorism, we are all its victims. In the war on terror, policies that encourage fear are a self-inflicted wound."

Unfortunately, almost nothing about the Department of Homeland Security suggests either a willingness to distinguish large risks from small ones or a concern about needlessly generating fear. In part this reflects the department's origins as a mishmash of pre-existing groups. In the best of circumstances it would take a long time to make the Secret Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Coast Guard, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and many others behave as if they were part of the same organization. Even coordinating data systems has been a major challenge.

Homeland security is at the moment largely a waste of money. The loose-nukes problem is different: it is the problem whose outcome is most clearly within America's power to control.

Still, that doesn't explain the department's policies, which have illustrated what Friedman calls the "democratization of risk," a term he does not mean as praise. By acting as if everyone poses an equal threat or is in equal danger—all passengers asked for their IDs, all motorists told by flashing signs to "report suspicious activity," all citizens told that the national alert level has gone from "elevated" to "high"—the department avoids making choices about which risks are most important. Since the DHS went into business, in 2002, news reports have chronicled a stream of pointless-seeming grants: half a million dollars to the town of North Pole, Alaska, for "homeland security rescue and communications equipment" to serve the town's 1,570 residents; $1.5 million to Grand Forks County, in North Dakota, for disaster-response equipment.

This past fall Veronique de Rugy, of the American Enterprise Institute, released a detailed assessment of where the

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money had gone. It noted that in 2003 Congress authorized the DHS to distribute $100 million in preparedness grants to the seven cities seen as facing the most serious threat: New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, San Francisco, and Houston. This was a deliberately chosen list, because of the targets and vulnerabilities in each city. At about the same time, the Insurance Services Office, a private organization that assesses risks for insurers, came up with a very similar list of nine cities where the risk of attack (or "loss," from the insurers' standpoint) was worst. The two cities it added were Philadelphia and Boston.

The problems showed themselves within a year of the original congressional directive, when the list of "critical" cities ballooned to fifty, including Fresno, St. Paul, and Baton Rouge. A DHS spokesman has contended, in comments to *The Washington Post*, that "better intelligence and more sophisticated analysis led to the increase in jurisdictions eligible for this funding." Maybe. Government and press reports have shown that most of the grants are either misdirected—cities putting the money toward their normal fire and police bills—or actively foolish, enticing every village to create a superfluous hazmat team. State-by-state homeland-security funding demonstrates the same failure to discriminate. The main problem is precisely that funding is state by state. When authorizing homeland-security funds Congress mandated that 40 percent of all the money be divided equally among the states, regardless of population or threat level. New York and Idaho each get the same cut of this money, as do California and Delaware. Overall, according to Veronique de Rugy's calculations, Wyoming has received $35.30 per capita in homeland-security grants and North Dakota $28.70, versus $4.70 for California and $5.10 for New York.

No principle of warfare is more familiar than the maxim "Know your enemy." No concept has been more thoroughly ignored by the United States in its efforts to eliminate the root causes of Islamic terrorism since 9/11.

Nothing about this is considered and serious. "U.S. Homeland Security policy has embraced the false idea that all American communities are likely targets of terrorism," Benjamin Friedman wrote. "It is time to stop indulging the expensive myth that risks are geographically distributed, time to abandon feel-good security, and time to accept reality: some risk is inevitable, some of us should be more afraid than others, but our fear is what our enemies intend."

If the United States decided to worry about terrorism only when that worry was immediately useful, and to accept smaller risks as the price of avoiding large ones, what would it do then? It could start by turning off the Big Brother–esque "suspicious activity" highway signs and eliminating the nationwide color-coded alert system. If there is a threat to Chicago or San Antonio that the people in that city should know about, tell them. There is no reason to have the "crawl" at the bottom of the Fox News screen flash "Terror Alert: High" to viewers in Seattle and Miami. Send most of the airport-security personnel home—and while we're at it, eliminate the sixty-mile-wide "no fly" circle that surrounds Air Force One wherever the president happens to be, disrupting airliners and all other air traffic.

We could also eliminate the ID checks at parking garages and the sign-in sheets at office buildings that many private firms have instituted to seem "secure." Each time I'm forced to sign one of these sheets, I look at the previous few pages. Usually someone has had the bravado to sign in as "Jack D. Ripper" or "Mullah Omar." The government could also start issuing visas at something like the pre-9/11 level. The drastic cutback in visas has reduced the flow of foreign students to American universities and of skilled foreign workers to American industries, while it may or may not have done anything to reduce the flow of future terrorists. Illegal crossings of our northern and southern borders are way up, as the legal flow has ebbed; these informal pathways will presumably be future terrorists' routes. Kenneth Rogoff, an economist at Harvard, wrote recently that the United States "will likely register slower economic growth in a few years due to post-9/11 visa restrictions alone."

In a less panicky mood America could apply a number of the recommendations that come up repeatedly in discussions with homeland-security experts. The essential concepts are these:

The country should undertake a systematic vulnerability study, something a number of states and industries have done piecemeal. The federal government has shirked an overall effort, in part because it would lead to awkward questions about why the money now goes where it does.

The country should prevent attacks where it can; but everywhere else it should concentrate on rebound capacity, so that when defenses break down, as they inevitably will, the damage can be contained. Improved public-health services are near the top of most "rebound" lists. They would be indispensable in any future biological attack, and helpful in all other circumstances.

Repairs to the nation's physical infrastructure, especially to its already shaky electrical power grid, are next on the priority list. And the country should recognize that certain potential targets—chemical plants in particular—are in private rather than public hands. The federal government now assumes that market forces will lead those industries to make the appropriate investments in security. But as Daniel Prieto points out, that assumption is unrealistic; as with

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pollution control, no company will want to go first unless it knows its competitors will have to follow.

Soldiers, police officers, and firefighters take risks to defend things we value. Our leaders explain the purpose of their sacrifice. They should also explain the importance of citizens' facing risks in order to preserve normal civic life.

The War of Ideas

No principle of warfare is more familiar than the maxim "Know your enemy." No concept has been more thoroughly ignored by the United States in its efforts to eliminate the root causes of Islamic terrorism since 9/11.

An amazing lack of interest in how life looks to those we are trying to persuade, deter, or capture accounts for many of America's difficulties in the past three years. People in the anti-terrorism business talk about our need to wage a decades-long struggle for the future of Islam, in which the United States has a vital stake. But consider the mini war of ideas we have already fought. America's approach to the Muslim world since 9/11 has made sense—to the Americans who designed it. First we would rout the Taliban from Afghanistan and deny al-Qaeda the sanctuaries and training camps that were important to its growth through the 1990s. Then we would take the war to Iraq, solving the immediate problem of Saddam Hussein and whatever weapons he had, and fostering a long-run example of a prosperous, democratic Arab-Islamic state. We would talk about freedom, and our actions would speak even louder; by the burdens we had borne we would show how deeply we cared. Meanwhile, we could leave our policy toward the Palestinians and the Israelis unchanged, on the assumption that it would be easier to push forward after Iraq was stabilized. And as a side benefit, we wouldn't have to worry about energy conservation or alternative fuels, because a peaceful Persian Gulf would be a bountiful supplier.

That was the intention. Somehow the results looked different to the people this strategy was supposed to influence. On this point one need not rely on the word of those who argued that the war in Iraq would undermine the war against terrorism by motivating more people to attack us: Richard Clarke; Michael Scheuer, the former head of the CIA's anti–bin Laden unit; General Anthony Zinni, the former CENTCOM commander; and others. One need not rely on the final report of the 9/11 Commission, about the mounting difficulty of winning hearts and minds among Muslims, or on studies from the Pew Global Attitudes Project showing that in Pakistan—a crucial American ally in the anti-terror effort—Osama bin Laden's "favorable" rating climbed to 67 percent after the invasion of Iraq, and George Bush's fell to seven percent.

Instead one can turn to the Pentagon's own Defense Science Board, which submitted a 102-page internal report in November about how America was doing in the global war of ideas. The report was not classified, but its existence was kept quiet until after the election. *The New York Times* was the first to mention its findings, in late November.

The report, now on the Federation of American Scientists' Web site, argues that America utterly failed in its post-9/11 "strategic communications" efforts with the Muslim world.

> The information campaign—or as some still would have it, "the war of ideas," or the struggle for "hearts and minds"—is important to every war effort. In this war it is an essential objective, because the larger goals of U.S. strategy depend on separating the vast majority of non-violent Muslims from the radical-militant Islamist-Jihadists. But American efforts have not only failed in this respect: they may also have achieved the opposite of what they intended.

In itemizing the list of problems the DSB placed its greatest stress on the federal government's failure of imagination. The United States knew that its intentions were good in removing Saddam Hussein from power and, later, in forcibly pacifying large parts of Iraq. Unfortunately, the Arabs and Muslims didn't see it that way. "*In the eyes of Muslims,* American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has not led to democracy there, but only more chaos and suffering," the DSB reported (italics in original). So, too, with other components of long-term U.S. strategy. Were we helping bring freedom to a troubled region? "Saying that 'freedom is the future of the Middle East' is seen as patronizing, suggesting that Arabs are like the enslaved peoples of the old Communist World—but Muslims do not feel this way: they feel oppressed, but not enslaved." Moreover, according to the DSB report, America misread the Muslims' real concerns. "Muslims do not 'hate our freedom,'" the DSB said, "but rather, they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the longstanding, even increasing support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Gulf states." All in all, from the perspective of the people whose minds we hoped to change, "the dramatic narrative since 9/11 has essentially borne out the entire radical Islamist bill of particulars." When Osama bin Laden and his counterparts want to say "America is even worse than you think!" all they need to do is point to the news.

What would a better approach look like—one based on how a Muslim audience would react? This is not the place to belabor the consequences of America's presence in Iraq. Obviously it complicates the effort to win Islamic sympathy, but it is a reality for now and will be for several years. Also, we can assume that military and police actions against specific terrorist units must continue. These can become more effective than they have been so far. *The Sling and the Stone,* by Marine Corps Colonel Thomas Hammes, and *Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods,* by H. John Poole, a Marine combat veteran of Vietnam, are two of several recent books offering new counterinsurgent strategies.

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But an improved military approach, while necessary, is sufficient neither to protect American territory nor to project American values in the right way. For both tasks the United States needs to come to a clearer understanding of the movement it is fighting and of the Islamic public that will either shelter terrorists or impede them. Fortunately, this is where the academic action is. Seemingly every day there is a conference somewhere in the world on the social, religious, economic, and geographic sources of terrorist movements, or on the titanic struggle between modernizing and radicalizing forces within Islam. Before me are proceedings from recent conferences on such topics in Paris, Jerusalem, and Oslo. This past fall in Washington, Brian Jenkins and his colleagues from RAND unveiled a project that attempted to model recent events through the eyes of al-Qaeda—where it had been successful, what it feared. Fighting terrorism and understanding Islam is as fertile a field as Soviet studies were during the Cold War.

Through these studies runs the idea that the United States could make an authentic and appealing case to the Muslim world—if it took the time to understand which parts of its argument are most likely to register with the person in the street. For instance, in much of today's Muslim world "justice" is a more compelling ideal than individual "liberty." "This really is a war of narratives in a battlefield of interpretation," Marc Sageman says. "We need to promote a positive vision to substitute for the vision of violence. And that vision has to be justice. It is no accident that these groups are always calling themselves 'The Party of Justice' and so on. In the time of the Suez Canal the United States stood for 'justice' against the Brits and French, and we were the toast of the Middle East. We need to be pushing a vision of a fair and *just* world, with us in harmony with the rest of the world, as opposed to at war with the rest of the world."

Why has America had a harder time lately pushing its vision of justice? The two major obstacles are its need for foreign oil, which forces it to coddle regimes it would otherwise blast as anti-democratic, and its failure even to feign interest in the Palestinians' hardships in their dispute with Israel. The need for oil drenches America in hypocrisy, and America's distance from the Palestinians is a barrier to even being heard in Arab discussions. There are sufficient economic and environmental reasons for the United States to work hard for a different energy strategy, and there are sufficient humanitarian and historical reasons for it to intensify pressure on both sides to comply with a land-for-peace deal. Such steps would also be part of the war of ideas, in helping America seem more a force for justice.

The United States could also find ways to signal involvement with and sympathy for Muslim societies. "U.S. officials have refused to appear on al-Jazeera," says Steven Miller, the director of international security programs at the Belfer Center. "That's nuts! Yes, al-Jazeera is often a vitriol machine. But you have to engage it, or Arab publics hear nothing but the vitriol. For the same reason, if I were George Bush, I wouldn't let a month go by without having some Arab leader in Crawford for a barbecue." Brian Jenkins says that every day the United States should stress the harm terrorists are doing to their fellow Muslims. "Our

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A PLACE FOR THE BEES

Virgil, GEORGICS *(Book IV: 8–32)*

First of all, find a protected place for the bees
To make their home, a place that's safe from the wind
That might prevent them from getting back with their food
And safe from the sheep or the wanton kids that trample
The flowers down, or the wandering heifer shaking
The dew from the grass and bruising the rising blades.
Protect the rich stalls of their honeycombs from the scaly
Shiny-backed lizard, and from the bee-eater and other
Birds of the sort, and Procne, whose bloody hands
Have left their signs upon her crimson breast.
Any of these can devastate the bees,
Catching them in their mouths to carry them home
As delicacies to feed to their cruel children.

And there should be a limpid spring nearby,
Or a moss-edged pool, or else a little brook,
Almost unseen, making its way through the grass,
And a big palm tree or oleaster shading
The vestibule of the place where the bees have settled,
So when the kings of the hive lead the swarm forth
In the welcoming season, and glad to be free at last,
The youthful bees are capering and playing,
There'll be a stream bank or a pond bank there,
Where they can escape the unaccustomed heat
And where the leaves of a tree can shelter them.
And whether it's pools or running streams, there must
Be willow shoots and stones disposed across,
As resting places for them to spread their wings
And dry them in the sun, if any had happened
To linger and were caught in a sudden shower,
Or the wind had suddenly blown them into the water.
And there should be sweet blooming marjoram near,
And the odor of serpylla spreading far,
And fragrant savory, and violets
Drinking from the trickling spring or stream.

—TRANSLATED BY DAVID FERRY

David Ferry's The Georgics of Virgil *will be published in May. Ferry received the Landon Translation Award for* The Epistles of Horace *(2001).*

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leaders typically issue horrified statements about the consequence of a bio-terror attack for Americans," he says. "Instead we should talk about the devastating impact it will have for the world—one fifth of which is Muslim. Despite the shortcomings in our public-health system, America will get through it. But a contagious disease, in today's circumstances? When it gets to Karachi or Cairo, it is going to produce a slaughter. We may underestimate our ability to wage this kind of political warfare." Stephen Van Evera, a member of the MIT Security Studies Program, says, "Public diplomacy—propaganda, if you will—should play a large role. But our efforts are halfhearted. Where are the coffee-table books about the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein? Where are the oral histories and documentaries?" Public diplomacy is not a scientific or predictable process. After the Soviet Union fell, some members of formerly communist states said that jazz broadcasts on Radio Free Europe had attracted them; others listened to the news; others were inspired by speeches by John Kennedy or Ronald Reagan—or by *Playboy* magazine. As dictatorships fell in South America, some people resented the United States for having propped up their former leaders; others respected the human-rights policy Jimmy Carter had emphasized; others just wanted to get to Houston for a job. We have no way of knowing exactly which of America's efforts or America's images will prove influential. But the lesson of the Cold War is that we should use every tool we have.

Visa policy has an impact on public diplomacy. "I want a *flood* of young Muslims studying here," Miller says. "Let's set up a King Hussein scholarship program, like the Fulbright scholars. Not every foreign student ends up loving or even liking this country, but on the whole, those who have lived here will have a much harder time demonizing America and Americans."

Loose Nukes: Do This First

Twice when I was interviewing authorities for this article, I heard a phrase that made me stop to be sure I had caught the words correctly. Once was when I was speaking with Stephen Van Evera, in his office at MIT. The other time was when I was speaking with Steven Miller, at Harvard. The words Van Evera used were "the worst failure of government in modern times." Miller's were only slightly different: "the single largest public-policy failure in recent memory." They were referring to the same fact: that thirteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was in no apparent hurry to be sure that the 30,000 nuclear warheads in the Soviet arsenal had been safely locked away.

Homeland security is at the moment largely a waste of money. The war of ideas is a battle we have not seriously begun to fight. The loose-nukes problem is different: it is the one aspect of the terrorist threat that could kill large numbers of us. And it is the problem whose outcome is most clearly within America's power to control. If the United States acts quickly enough, it can reduce essentially to zero the chance that one of its cities will be vaporized. If it is too slow, it will raise that chance to a near certainty.

During the Clinton years Graham Allison, then an assistant secretary of defense, prepared a classified list called "A Hundred Horribles." It itemized scenarios in which terrorists could inflict disruption, destruction, and death on the United States, and ranked them according to potential harm. A 9/11-style episode, in which a hijacked airplane was crashed into a "trophy building," was on the list—in the bottom half. "Number one on everyone's list was the nuclear detonation in a city," Allison told me recently. "That's the only way you can kill hundreds of thousands of people in an instant."

The fearsome power of nuclear weapons is so familiar as to have become banal. Yet a diminished sense of nuclear peril creates a political problem: the temptation to forget how different this peril is from hijackings, suicide bombings, hostage murders, and nearly anything else that terrorists do. That is why Van Evera and Miller used the phrases they did. It is also why Howard Baker, a former Republican Senate majority leader, and Lloyd Cutler, a former Democratic White House counsel, said in a January 2001 report that "the *most urgent unmet national security threat* to the United States today is the danger that weapons of mass destruction or weapons-usable material in Russia could be stolen and sold to terrorists or hostile nation-states and used against American troops abroad or citizens at home."

In 2002 Osama bin Laden issued a *fatwa* authorizing the killing of up to four million Americans and specifying that half of them should be children. This he had calculated as a proportionate response to the number of Arabs killed by U.S. and Israeli actions. The only way to kill on this scale would be with a nuclear warhead.

How would the terrorists get the bomb? The easiest way would be to buy one smuggled from the Soviet arsenal. "Since the accounting system in the USSR was so bad, you just don't know what went missing" in the turbulent years following the Soviet collapse, says Matthew Bunn, of the Belfer Center's Project on Managing the Atom. "I would say there's stuff that got stolen that we don't know about, because there is stuff that got stolen we *do* know about." Bunn said that the cultural aftereffects of the long Soviet years have probably kept the materials safer than they would otherwise be. "You couldn't talk to a foreigner without being watched," he said. "They were coming out of decades of life with a closed society and closed borders. Plus, they had this amazing patriotism and devotion to duty of people who were working the Russian nuclear systems. If you had put an equivalent number of Americans under equivalent circumstances for an equivalent period of time, there'd have been more theft."

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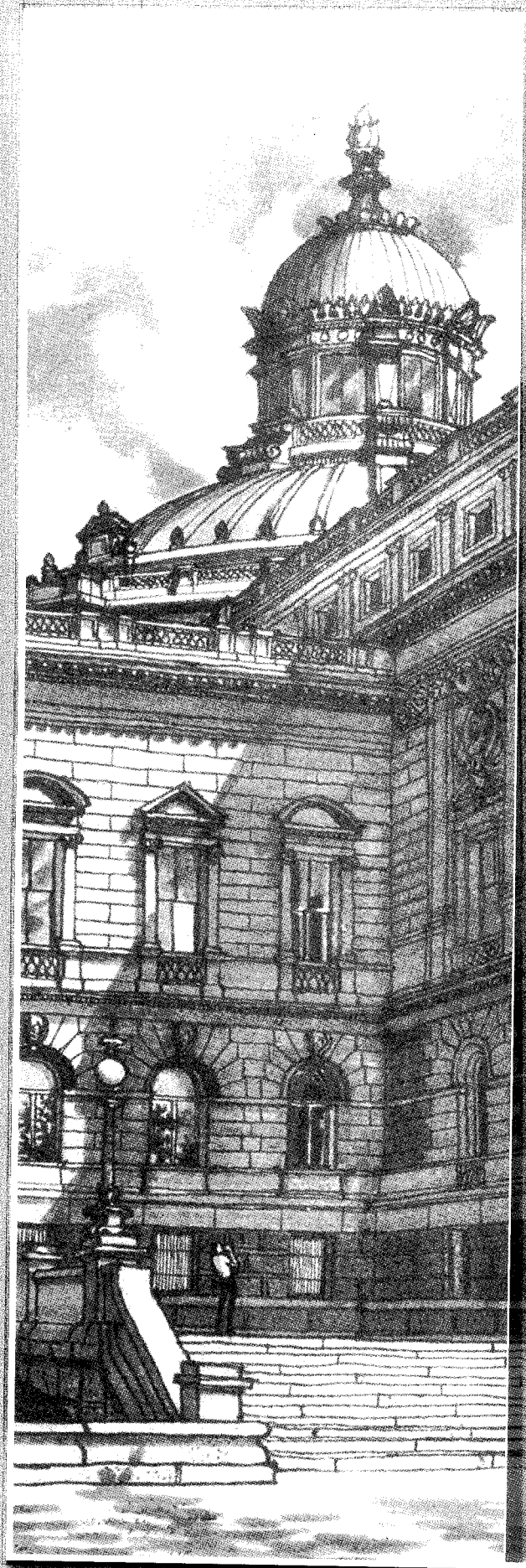

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And if no warheads are available ready-made? Then technicians for the terrorist groups will need to make their own—which is no longer such a technical challenge. The basic design concepts, closely guarded thirty years ago, are now discussed in high school physics classes. As I write, I have on my screen a how-to diagram for a simple bomb from the Web site of Georgia State University.

The good news is that nuclear terrorism could conceivably be prevented, and the strategy for preventing it is utterly straightforward. It is based on one crucial difference between the nuclear threat and all other forms of terrorism: not that the weapons are so much more destructive but that they are so much harder to obtain. If terrorists cannot get the material—highly enriched uranium, plutonium, or existing bombs—from the limited number of countries that produce them, the problem goes away. For the moment, no finished bomb or fissile material is known to have entered the hands of terrorist groups. The highest priority for national defense is ensuring that this remains so.

Why has America had a harder time lately pushing its vision of justice? The need for oil drenches America in hypocrisy, and America's distance from the Palestinians is a barrier to even being heard in Arab discussions.

The single worst threat to America's future, then, has the clearest solution. The best-known plans have three big themes in common: a drastic emergency campaign to bring Soviet "loose nukes" under control, which mainly means money to hire former Soviet scientists for the task; rigid supervision of all existing fissile material, which, as Ashton Carter, an assistant secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, has put it, should be locked up and treated "as if it were already a bomb"; and diplomatic, economic, and (when necessary) military measures to keep any new fissile material from being produced.

The gulf between any of these urgent, commonsense plans and existing U.S. policy is enormous. No one thinks the Clinton administration was spending enough on the "cooperative threat-reduction" program for controlling the former Soviet arsenal. The Bush administration is spending less. Including costs for Iraq, total defense spending next year will approach $500 billion, and defense against terrorism is its highest stated priority. Of that $500 billion a tiny fraction will be devoted to all forms of nuclear-material control: about $1 billion. Years from now, if an American city is devastated by a "small" Hiroshima-scale explosion, everyone will ask, "How could this have happened?" The answer will be "Because we let it." We didn't bother to control the "loose nukes" when that was still possible.

Another tool for discouraging the spread of nuclear weapons is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Under it the existing nuclear powers enjoy a permanent, "unfair" advantage over the non-nuclear states. In exchange they are supposed to pledge never to use nuclear weapons against a state that doesn't have them, and to reduce their own nuclear arsenals over time. Current U.S. policy creates problems in two ways: the "pre-emptive war" doctrine, ultimately backed by nuclear weapons, extends to Iran, which has signed the treaty; and the Bush administration has proposed developing several new nuclear weapons, including the "robust nuclear earth penetrator," a super-strength bunker-buster. (Just after the election the House voted against further funding for this giant new bomb, with a number of Republicans saying it was unnecessary.)

Suppose the United States viewed the loose-nukes project as the equivalent of the race to the moon in the 1960s, or the search for a polio cure in the 1950s. Suppose it *had* to succeed, and as fast as possible. What might that cost? According to Graham Allison, the total might be as high as $30 billion over three years. America now spends that much every six months in Iraq. It spent more than that during the first term of the Bush administration on a missile-defense plan that, even if it worked perfectly, would not do any good for another ten years. By then even one loose nuke could make all other plans moot. This is the place to start.

In 1949 everything changed for America when the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb. By that time U.S. political leaders had already developed concepts to govern a very long struggle against Soviet communism. Harry Truman, George Kennan, George Marshall, and their colleagues are heroes now because what they explained to the public through the late 1940s and early 1950s proved to be so wise.

Could today's leaders look like heroes in fifty years? Yes—if they similarly laid the groundwork for a long, principled, and sustainable struggle. A Truman would tell us that loose nuclear weapons are the real emergency of this moment, and that instead of pussyfooting around we should control them right away. A Kennan would explain the sources of Muslim extremist behavior and how our actions could encourage or retard it. A Marshall would point out how gravely we left ourselves exposed through our reliance on oil from the Persian Gulf.

And the Harry Truman who strolled on Washington sidewalks even after assassins tried to shoot him could explain something else: that a courageous, confident, open society is a goal in itself. When we face dangers on our own, character, faith, and family make us brave. When we face them collectively, political leadership does—or does not.

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FIELD GUIDE

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QUESTIONS OF REPLICATION: THE BRITTLE STAR

Why now, under seven fathoms of sea,
with sunlight just a sheen on its carapace
and someone's dark paddle stroking above?
Why, at this moment, does it lift from the reef
its serrated jaws, its four undulant,
tendril arms—the fifth atomized
by a predator's nudge—to begin
the body's slow unbuckling? Near the reef
a kick-dust of plankton hovers. And eel grass.
And far down the sea floor, the true starfish
in their dank, illegible constellations.
What salt-rich analgesic allows
this self-division, as the disc parts
and tendril arms, each with a thousand
calcite eyes, sway into slender helixes?
Half disc and half disc. Limb pair; limb pair.
Two thousand eyes; two thousand crystal eyes—
that must notice now the emergent other,
aslant but familiar, slowly swimming away:
its butterflied, genetic list, its tendency
toward luminescence. Limb over limb,
where is it headed? And when will its absence
echo, adrift in the sea's new weight?
Half shape; half shape—how far will it stroke
before loss, like daylight, lessens,
and the one that remains twines its optic arms
to look to the self of completion?

—LINDA BIERDS

THE COHORT

It's true: you wake up one morning and they're gone,
the flock of a hundred redpolls who swept in like Huns
with their tiny red caps and black moustaches,
their breasts freckled and stippled like thrushes',
an irruption of redpolls you haven't seen in a decade
and may never see again in the disorderly parade
of your lifetime. How they intimidated the chickadees,
the titmice, even the needle-nosed nuthatches,
batting your year-round faithfuls away from the feeder.
How they chattered, snatching and flapping, rapacious
yet charming in their little red yarmulkes ...
you shiver, remembering, refilling the cylinder.
The sunflower seeds glisten like ebony.
O merciless January, where has the cohort gone?

—MAXINE KUMIN

FLYING SEED

There is a barrier
that locks me in.
I must endure this sleep
until what seals me off

is burnt, frozen, exposed
to axe-blow, erosion, rain,
noon, twilight, starlight:
then I will flower,

everything in me—
triple-folded leaf
of the female organ,
leaf-shoot of the male,
whorled together
like petals in bloom—
will be explained
as if by a voice:

now I must pass
unknown to myself
through the belly and gut
of the northbound sparrow.

—D. NURKSE

Linda Bierds teaches at the University of Washington. Her new collection of poems, First Hand, *will appear this spring. Maxine Kumin is the author of fourteen collections, including the recently published* Jack and Other New Poems. *She lives in New Hampshire. D. Nurkse lives in Brooklyn. His new collection,* Burnt Island, *will be published this spring.*

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	YTD as of 10/31/04	Rankings and average annual total returns for periods ended 9/30/04							
		1 Year	Rank	3 Years	Rank	5 Years	Rank	10 Years	Rank
Neuberger Berman International Fund—Investor Class	16.16%	33.34%	1%	14.08%	8%	4.62%	13%	7.81%	14%
Lipper International Multi-Cap Core Average	7.21%	20.74%		8.64%		(0.08)%		4.75%	

Performance data quoted represent past performance, which is no guarantee of future results. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Results are shown on a "total return" basis and include reinvestment of all dividends and capital gain distributions. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance data quoted. For performance data current to the most recent month-end, please visit www.nb.com/performance. Please note that investing in foreign securities involves greater risks than investing in securities of U.S. issuers, including currency fluctuations, potential political instability, restrictions on foreign investors, less regulation and less market liquidity. Source: Lipper. Neuberger Berman International Fund ranked against the following number of funds in Lipper's International Multi-Cap Core Category over the following time periods: 268 funds over the 1-year period, 221 funds over the 3-year period, 165 funds over the 5-year period, and 49 funds over the 10-year period. Rankings based on total return ended 9/30/04. Neuberger Berman Management Inc. caps the Investor class expenses of the fund. Absent this arrangement, the returns would be lower.

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LETTER FROM BAGHDAD

Life in the wilds of a city without trust

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

Now that the roads into Iraq have effectively been closed to Westerners by banditry and insurgent attacks, the best way into Baghdad for ordinary civilians is by air from Jordan, aboard a decrepit airliner, an old Fokker that shuttles two or three times a day between Amman and Baghdad—that is, as long as the airport is open. The airplane is operated by Royal Jordanian, and is flown by a South African crew—people who for whatever reasons are willing day in and day out to risk ground fire and surface-to-air missiles in a thin-skinned machine with limited maneuverability and no active defenses. For passengers willing to share briefly in the same risk, the ticket price is stiff—about $1,500 round-trip, for a one-hour flight each way. Nonetheless, dozens of takers show up at Amman's airport every day, many lugging duffels heavy with booze and body armor. They filter silently through the dim, dingy terminal, and collect at the gate in an elongated waiting room that seems to have been chosen for its isolation. There they eye one another with a single paradoxical question in mind: What sort of fool would travel voluntarily to Iraq these days?

The answer varies. A few are elite Iraqis, heavyset men in old three-piece suits, sometimes with their wives, returning home as people strangely insist on doing, out of habit or perceived necessity, and quite possibly to die. Some are Western war correspondents, the real thing, young-looking and scruffy in their street beards and their rumpled shirts without epaulets, who are less concerned about missiles than about the daily challenge that awaits on the far side, of doing their work while somehow preserving their necks. Others seem to be engineers or technical consultants, and first-timers in war; they are middle-aged men with wedding rings, carrying briefcases and appearing unsure, as if they took a wrong turn somewhere and are surprised. Still others are returning Green Zone hands, trading certainties among themselves with a familiarity bred in the relative safety and isolation of their fortress lives within the sprawling American compound at the center of Baghdad. But most of the passengers on most of the flights are different again, visibly tough and muscular men, British, South African, and American, often tattooed and clean-shaven, with close-cropped hair—contract warriors among the thousands who have signed on to ride shotgun for the Iraqi infrastructure projects where so much American and Iraqi money has been ploughed into the ground. All these people are acutely aware of their destination. The trip lies ahead with the inevitability of a sentence that has been pronounced on them. The mood in the waiting room is not fearful, but it is decidedly fatalistic.

During the short bus ride across the tarmac the passengers stand for the most part silent. But then there is the flight itself, at the start of which a couple of pretty South African attendants maintain the pretense of normalcy, performing an ordinary airline welcome ("Thank you for flying Royal Jordanian") and advising the passengers on the standard safety rules—to fasten their seat belts, for instance, despite a sentiment in the cabin of "Why bother?" and the unavoidable contemplation of the effect of a missile strike. In a war like this one the battlefield takes so many innocent-looking forms. The airplane climbs over Amman and heads east at high altitude across a desert of tans and blacks. The desert is scarred by military works. At some point it becomes Iraq. The attendants serve coffee with smiles. There is a boxed snack that it is wise to avoid. The captain comes on with the weather ahead, which for most of the year is simply hot. Then the Euphrates appears below, and the irrigated fields of Mesopotamia, and finally the Tigris, and Baghdad itself—a sprawl of a city, hazy with dust. The airplane holds overhead the Baghdad airport at 15,000 feet, above the range of the insurgency. When cleared for the approach it descends rapidly, with the landing gear and spoilers out, in an aggressive left spiral that is intended to reduce exposure to ground fire but, given the proximity of insurgents, offers no guarantees. After a final left turn it immediately touches down. During the taxi to the terminal a flight attendant says, "Welcome to Baghdad," but has the grace at least not to wish the passengers a pleasant stay.

It is a strange sensation to be delivered alone and so quickly into the radical world of a shapeless war. The Baghdad terminal is a grandiose, nearly deserted edifice, roamed by heavily armed guards, and sometimes shaken by the distant thumps of out-

William Langewiesche is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

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going artillery or incoming mortars—at first it is hard to tell which. The new Iraqi government provides a visa on the spot, and stamps the passengers through amid confusion and delay. They get their bags and go to the curbside, where U.S. government employees and contractors are picked up in armored convoys for the drive to the Green Zone. Those who do not qualify for such treatment—which now means mostly Iraqis and Western journalists—catch a minibus that takes them several miles to a heavily defended checkpoint at the airport perimeter, where presumably they have arranged for someone trusted to pick them up. If that person does not appear (a common problem in a place where telephone communication is inadequate at best), there is no choice but to return to the terminal and try somehow to get a message through from there. The alternative of taking a taxi, of which there are many in Baghdad, has become impossibly dangerous as criminality and the insurgency have intertwined and spread, and the street price for a captive American has risen to $25,000, or so it is said.

Beyond the checkpoint the war is immediately all around. Indeed, the divided highway into town, though merely five miles long, is notorious for the frequency of lethal attacks. Western journalists generally negotiate it in ordinary Iraqi sedans, which are less likely than the American-style armored SUVs to draw the insurgents' fire, but by the same token cannot easily be distinguished as innocuous by the U.S. troops who have been given the tricky job of patrolling the road in their Bradley fighting vehicles and armored Humvees. It is prudent for people in the sedans, including the drivers, to raise their hands when passing one of those patrols, to show that they are empty. Of course the floors of the sedans these days are probably littered with loaded weapons—Kalashnikovs, pistols, and even grenades at the ready—and the soldiers know that, too. The soldiers are increasingly nervous and ready to fire. Almost imperceptibly their discipline is fraying. One of the ironies for Westerners trying to reduce the dangers in Iraq by blending in, however partially, is that as the war worsens, they run an increased risk of attack from both sides. This is the danger that Iraqis face as well. If there is any relief in leaving the airport road and entering the deadly slow-moving traffic within the city, it is that at least the American patrols are less present.

Several days before the U.S. elections in November, American officials revised their count of hard-core insurgents upward to as many as 12,000—or 20,000 if active sympathizers were included. Leaving aside the question of how isolated bureaucracies can derive such numbers in the midst of a genuine and popular insurrection, the cap at 20,000 elicited grim disbelief among ordinary Iraqis, frontline soldiers, and others with a sense of a struggle on the streets that has spun out of control. There are six million people in Baghdad alone, and another 10 million in the angriest areas of central Iraq, and many are young men with a taste for war. Meanwhile, foreign fighters continue to arrive from throughout the Middle East, across borders that are unpoliceable not merely because they are long and wild but, more significant, because of the support these travelers receive once they cross the line and mix into the local populations. Moreover, though they probably number a few thousand, the foreign fighters constitute only a small fraction of the forces now arrayed against the United States. As for the tactics involved, some are indeed crudely terroristic—the ongoing assassination of university professors, for instance, and the occasional car bombings of innocent market crowds in the cities. For the most part, however, the insurgents' attacks are less nihilistic than they are logical and precisely focused, whether against the American coalition and its camp followers or their Iraqi agents and collaborators. The truth is that however vicious or even sadistic the insurgents may be, they are acutely aware of their popular base, and are responsible for fewer unintentional "collateral" casualties than are the clumsy and overarmed American forces. Rhetoric aside, this is not a war on terror but a running fight with a large part of the Iraqi people. It is a classic struggle between the legions of a great power and the resistance of a native population. It is infinitely wider and deeper than officials can admit. And the United States is on the way to losing it.

The personal-security details, made up of private contract warriors driving armored SUVs, operate outside any effective control, often in a hostile and undisciplined manner, sowing hatred wherever they move.

Tragically, this was not the necessary outcome of the American invasion. After Baghdad fell, in the spring of 2003, the mood of the people was cautious but glad for the demise of Saddam Hussein, and open to the possibility that an American occupation would be a change for the better. By most measures it has not worked out that way. Though some of the blame lies with the immaturity and opportunism of the Iraqi people, these were factors that needed to be handled, and were not. The Iraqi people are far from stupid or unaware. But in the isolation and arrogance that have characterized the American occupation, never have we addressed them directly, explained ourselves honestly, humbly sought their support, respected their views of solutions, of political power, of American motivations, or of the history and future of Iraq. Even short of the killing we have done, we have broken down their doors, run them off the roads,

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HADI MIZBAN/AP PHOTO

swiveled our guns at them, shouted profanities at them, and disrespected their women—all this hundreds or thousands of times every day. We have dishonored them publicly, and within a society that places public honor above life itself. These are the roots of the fight we are in. Now Saddam himself is re-emerging as a symbol of national potency.

There is more: faced with resistance, we have failed with both the carrot and the stick. Take the stick first. The mere presence of American troops may help prevent the outbreak of factional fighting, but the U.S. military is not a police force, and at no level of strength can it serve as one on Iraqi soil. The soldiers don't know the language, the culture, or the people, and they don't know who does know, or whom to trust. As measured by the personal risks they take they stay in the country too long, but in terms of understanding the human terrain they rotate out far too soon. Their mission amounts to driving around in armored vehicles from which visibility is poor, trying to protect themselves, and occasionally engaging in politically disastrous assaults on neighborhoods and towns. The American success in Fallujah amounts to little more than a measure of American frustration. Across large swaths of central Iraq the insurgents exploit the troops adroitly. They fire on passing patrols from ordinary houses and slip away, counting on the Americans perhaps to pull back at first, but then to return in force to shoot, make arrests, and generally retaliate. The residents of the targeted neighborhoods understand the insurgents' trick, but it is the Americans they blame, as they blame them for drawing the insurgents' fire in the first place. Similarly, the insurgents get the Americans to deliver their smart bombs to the wrong addresses—making a mockery of the conceit, already seen on Iraqi streets as a sign of American cowardice, that this war can be fought at standoff distances from the comfort of a combat jet. Then, of course, there are all the collateral dead: officially their numbers are not known, but they amount to a lot nonetheless, every one with family and friends.

On the carrot side of the American intervention are the infrastructure projects—fixing the electrical grid, for instance, and providing for clean water and sewage treatment, and upgrading the hospitals (into which the growing numbers of casualties are now carried). These projects were supposed to promote stability and provide Iraqis with better lives. Billions of dollars have been poured into them through the device of open-ended "cost plus" contracts, by which companies (almost all of them large and American) are reimbursed for the cost of the work, however they define that work, with an additional fee on top. There is no incentive to run efficient or discreet operations—to tread lightly on Iraqi soil. Indeed, quite the opposite. The main contractors base themselves in the Green Zone in grandly redundant style, with an abundance of people, equipment,

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and backup. Because of the danger that exists on the outside, they have retreated from many of the reconstruction projects, but they remain in the country fully staffed, and continue to drink from public funds. Day to day much of their attention is taken up by complying with the arcane accounting requirements of the U.S. Federal Acquisition Regulations—a thicket of rules that do not limit the cost-plus profits so long as the columns are kept straight, and whose mandates serve, however unintentionally, to exclude potential low-cost competitors, particularly the Iraqis. In truth, the fact that the large contractors are sitting inefficiently in the Green Zone is of little direct consequence to the war outside. What is of consequence, paradoxically, is that they are not entirely inactive: despite the hazards, they continue to pursue some reconstruction projects in the city and beyond, and these projects—intermittent, inconclusive, and unconvincing to the intended beneficiaries, ordinary Iraqis overwhelmed by anarchy—require visits by the contractors' expatriate technicians and construction managers. The visits, in turn, require the expatriates to travel to and from the sites, and this is done in the heaviest possible manner (where again one can see the cost-plus dynamic at play), in convoys of aggressively driven armored SUVs, typically three, with a team of as many as ten ostentatiously armed drivers and bodyguards. These are the personal-security details, made up of the private contract warriors who have been such a visible part of the American presence, and who operate outside any effective control, often in a hostile and undisciplined manner, sowing hatred wherever they move. With every trip to or from a reconstruction site they threaten and anger untold numbers of Iraqis on the streets. If the purpose of the infrastructure projects was to win the sympathy of Iraq, then this is one important reason why we have sunk into war instead.

In any case, the war has degenerated to the extent that the construction sites have become nothing more than symbols of the despised American presence. For the resistance they also serve as convenient collection points for identifiable collaborators—usually laborers—who can easily be hunted down and killed as a lesson for others. There is a lot of that sort of teaching going on these days. At just one sewage project in Baghdad, for example, as many as thirty Iraqi workers were shot in only three months late last year. It is an unusual record only because someone kept count. The assassination campaign is systematic. It is decimating American projects throughout central Iraq, and has taken a particularly heavy toll among Green Zone workers. So pervasive is the threat that Iraqis still working with the occupation do not dare speak English on the phone, even at home in front of only their children, lest word leak out. When I call the Iraqis who work for me, a driver and a guard, my first question is whether they can talk. As often as not they answer by hanging up. This is new. It has gotten to the point where collaborators feel lucky if they are not killed at once but instead given a chance to mend their ways. That chance comes in the form of one of several standard letters.

> WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!
> To the brothers of the monkey and pig. Show your regret, or your destiny will be like that of your brother spies. You shall follow your brothers. You will not succeed before God's anger, and our own. You are the enemy of God and Country.
> Signed,
> Self-Sacrificers

Or

> BY GOD MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL.
> You, the Afterbirth, DO NOT sell your soul to the enemy. Because you are our brother in religion, we give you this one last warning before death.

Whichever note he receives, a collaborator generally has forty-eight hours to stop working with the occupation, and somehow to make this very clear. If he does not stop, he will certainly die. As a result, almost everyone hastens to comply. A few of the most stubborn do not. They move with their families to new neighborhoods and houses. They change their names, and grow beards or shave beards off. They come up with new fictions to explain their days. They avoid at any cost traveling directly from home to work, and especially traveling directly back. For all this, though, they cannot escape an aura of doom; they are people who at best seem to have slowed the clock. Outside the Green Zone there is really no hiding from the insurgency anymore.

Nonetheless, some Westerners still live in the wilds of the city. They are reduced now mostly to a few journalists and the best of the contract warriors—people whose work requires them to maintain some sort of connection to the realities of the Iraqi street. This is difficult, because the realities are lethal quite particularly to them: they are being stalked, captured, tortured, and killed. The armed forces who sometimes pass by, whether Iraqi or American, will not or cannot protect them, and indeed pose significant threats of their own. Furthermore, there are no safe refuges in which to hunker down. Out of inertia the network-television crews, clumsy with bodyguards and equipment, remain nearly prisoners in the large hotels at the center of the city. The hotels have become famous even beyond Iraq—the Palestine, the Sheraton, and across the Tigris the Mansour. They are grim concrete structures—stale with tobacco smoke, bad food, and dust—that, though heavily protected and surrounded by blast walls and concertina wire, present obvious targets for the insurgents' attacks. They have been rocketed already, and it seems just a matter of time until one or another gets badly bombed. The television crews know it, too. They rotate through a few months at a time, and send out their Iraqi stringers to gather stories and video footage on the streets

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(a bomb here or there, the wounded and the crying), and do their "standups" with live backdrops of the city, and for their personal safety trust in luck.

Most of the print reporters rotate through as well. During the golden times of the summer and fall of 2003, before the insurgency gathered force, those who worked for the large newspapers and wire services left the big establishments and installed their "bureaus" in private houses, which were both more comfortable and less obvious than the hotels. Some had gardens and pools. Gradually, then, as the war deepened, they fortified those places with higher walls, steel doors, sandbags, iron grilles, wire mesh, and even safe rooms into which, in theory (if they moved impossibly fast), they could escape in the event of an assault. They hired guards with AK-47s, and then hired more. They hooked up TV cameras to watch the roofs, and the streets outside. They put a halt to the sort of partying that had gone on in the early days, after Baghdad's fall. And they tried very hard to maintain low profiles. There were scares now and then, when one group or another would flee a house believed to have come under surveillance, but the security seemed to work fairly well—until the insurgents simply ignored it and began to invade houses, last fall.

There are no safe refuges. The hotels are grim concrete structures—stale with tobacco smoke, bad food, and dust. Though surrounded by blast walls and concertina wire, they present obvious targets.

It became clear then that the defenses had been an illusion all along. And so the reporters migrated again, or most of them did, this time into some of the small hotels, where they remain today, on the theory of the middle ground—the idea that such establishments may offer stiffer resistance to incursions than can private households, but nonetheless may appear too insignificant to waste rockets and car bombs on. These are wishful thoughts, of course, and they have already been proved wrong, but what else are people to do? The reporters spend much of their time now in earnest conversation over such fine-tunings, knowing full well, as they readily admit, that by any normal standards, even those of an ordinary war zone, in Baghdad there are no acceptable solutions.

The greater danger anyway is in driving through the city or beyond. The basics are clear. Discreet sedans, again, are the vehicles of choice. The armored versions of them, which some news organizations now have, might get you through a short gunfight, but they can kill you, too, particularly through the overpressure that results from the explosion of a rocket-propelled grenade that penetrates to the inside. A thin-skinned car won't stop rifle rounds, but it may allow a rocket grenade to pass right through. So pick your poison. It may help to wear body armor if it does not have a visible neck guard and can be hidden under a loose shirt. Conversely, helmets and ballistic sunglasses are far too showy. Of course, the goal is to avoid being attacked in the first place. There is no sure way to do this and still get around. If you are staying in a hotel, you have to assume that you are being watched on the street both coming and going, and probably by the desk clerks as well. It is essential therefore to avoid set schedules and routines, to vary routes, and if possible occasionally to change cars. It is also important to have a skillful driver, who knows when to move fast and when not to, and who is aware of what is happening around him on the streets. The same goes for the guard, who needs to be good with a gun but, more important, to be smart. And, of course, it is important to have people you can trust.

Sadly, as the insurgency grows, trust is fading away. This is one of the most sensitive and dangerous aspects of life for reporters in Baghdad today: nearly every news organization is facing troubles with its Iraqi staff, and to various but increasing degrees is being held in some way hostage, out of fear of the consequences of disagreement or disciplinary action. You don't just go around laying off people in Iraq these days. Indeed, the very air of Baghdad seems thick with suspicions of betrayal. Even within the Green Zone, which is largely self-sufficient, many Americans now automatically distrust any Iraqi employee who has been there for longer than about two months. Why has this person not been assassinated, people wonder—or at least frightened off with a letter? The question is legitimate. Americans have awakened and found that the enemy is closer even than dreamed of before.

It is a new day in Iraq, yes. In the space of just a few months the interim government of Ayad Allawi has gutted many of the earlier reforms and has lost any hope of legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people, who see it as a flimsy construct propped up by the United States, and powerless in the face of their own disdain. Corruption is rife on every level, and with it cynicism. The courts are bowing to political pressure. The Iraqi security forces are riddled with insurgents, not because the vetting is poor, or because agents have been planted, but because hatred of America has grown within the ranks just as it has in Iraqi society at large. There is still some hope attached to the coming elections—if only because most Shiites have so far stayed out of the fray. People have different thresholds for crossing over into the resistance, and different capacities for violent action, but even some of my old friends, once so welcoming to me as an American, are telling me that they are approaching those lines. The question is no longer who is against the United States in Iraq but who is not.

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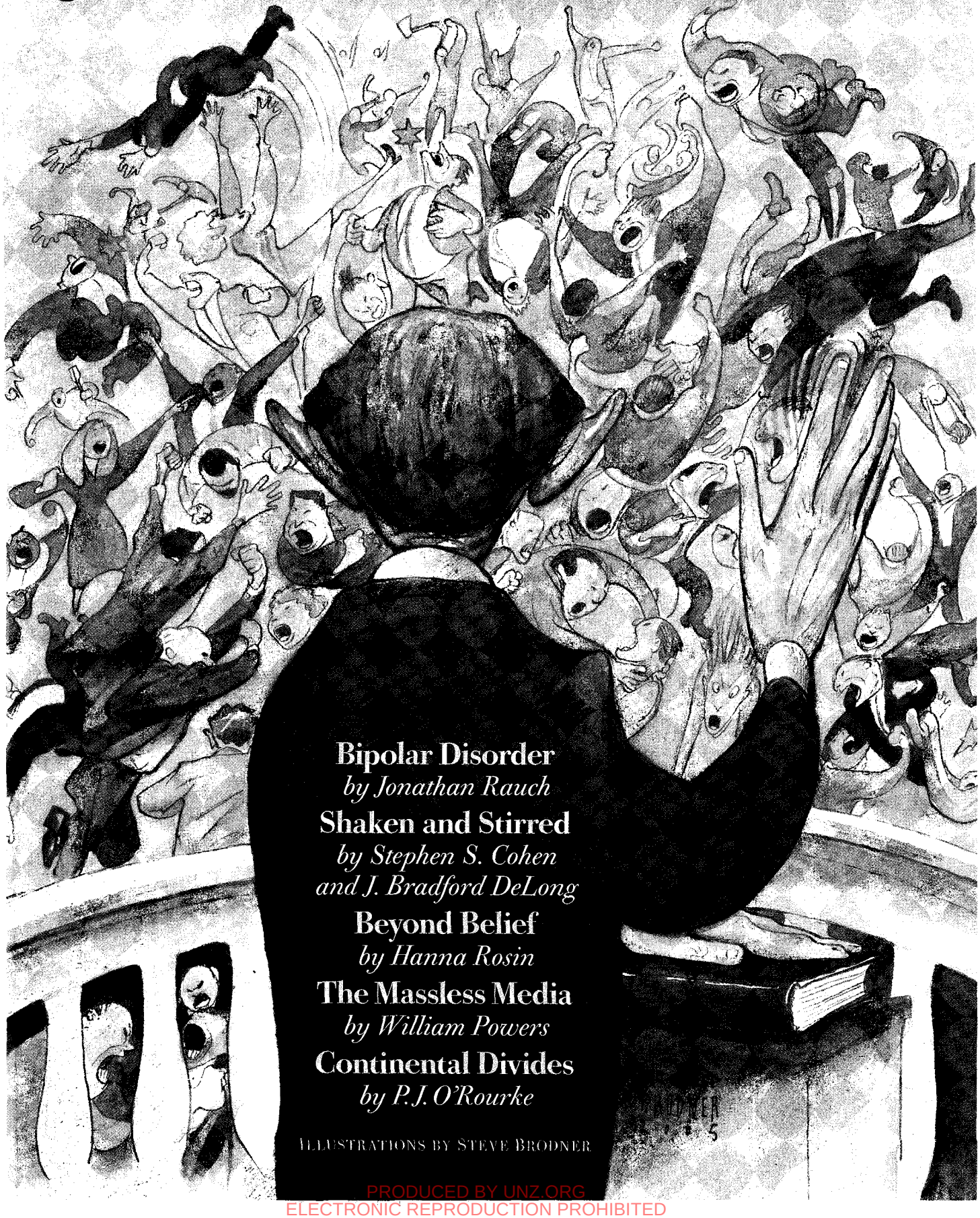
STATE OF THE UNION



Bipolar Disorder
by Jonathan Rauch

Shaken and Stirred
by Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong

Beyond Belief
by Hanna Rosin

The Massless Media
by William Powers

Continental Divides
by P.J. O'Rourke

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One Nation, Divisible

Shortly after the presidential election last November, a new map began making its way around the Internet, quickly achieving notoriety. The map suggested a geopolitical re-sorting of North America into two more culturally cohesive and geographically sensible nations, helpfully renamed the United States of Canada (comprising our northern neighbor and the "blue" states) and Jesusland (the "red" states).

Election day is now some two months behind us, and the worst excesses of partisan name-calling and public hand-wringing over unbridgeable divides in American society seem largely to have passed. But as President George W. Bush prepares to deliver his fourth State of the Union address, serious questions about the unity of our culture remain: Just how many Americas will the president in fact be addressing? Are the fissures in our society changing or deepening? What binds us as Americans, and how strongly?

For this, our third annual survey of the state of the union, we asked several prominent writers and thinkers to explore splits within the United States in a number of key areas (politics, religion, economic life, culture, and the media), paying particular attention to historical context and likely future scenarios. The resulting essays stand independently, but collectively they offer several lessons about the nature and the course of divisions in the United States.

Most broadly, **the idea that the nation is neatly divided into two ideologically consistent, geographically separate camps is false.** Americans are divided over countless issues, but typically in ways that defy easy stereotypes. As Jonathan Rauch and P. J. O'Rourke show in their different ways, the cultural geography of the United States offers a far richer palette than just red and blue. There is enormous diversity from state to like-colored state, within each state (whatever its color), and even within superficially like-minded groups. In what we think, read, and watch; in whom we marry and how often we divorce; in what we give and buy; and in innumerable other ways, we are a maddeningly inconsistent lot, however we are labeled.

On the issues that matter most, however—those of basic values, social tolerance, and public policy—**Americans appear *less* divided than they have been throughout much of U.S. history.** As Rauch argues, today the largest divide may be not between two American cultures but between American culture, which might be best characterized as widely tolerant of its own incoherence, and American politics, which has grown ever more partisan, owing largely to electoral developments such as the rise of primaries and the gerrymandering of districts.

Nor is it only the politicians. As Hanna Rosin observes, **an ideological sorting is also taking place within American religion.** Whereas in the past the primary divides between worshippers were denominational—between Christians and Jews, Protestants and Catholics, Baptists and Lutherans—increasingly Americans of faith are coalescing across denominations into perceptible blocs, one traditionalist and relatively conservative, another modernist and relatively liberal. In the 2004 election this religious divide closely paralleled the country's political divide. And while that may not be the case in the future, the traditionalist and modernist categories appear to be hardening.

There are other signs that divides in American society may widen in the future. Deep economic and technological forces are undermining the political, cultural, and economic unity that has characterized the postwar era.

Specifically, Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong argue that **the gradual opening of our vast service sector to foreign competition is likely to cause economic upheaval** on a scale not seen since the 1800s, when the development of the steamship and the telegraph made overseas trade in most goods possible. This new economic era will bring with it tremendous opportunity, but also considerable risk—including the real possibility of downward mobility for many in the middle class.

At the same time, as William Powers explains, because of the Internet, satellite radio, and ever proliferating TV channels, **the mass media are giving way to smaller outlets that in many ways resemble the noisy, combative press of the nineteenth century.** This fragmentation into ever narrower cultural, ideological, and demographic niches may increase the social atomization and political fractiousness that many Americans already find so dispiriting.

But as Rauch, Powers, and O'Rourke all write, **a society that is more fractious is not necessarily weaker.** Debate often produces better decisions. And political contentiousness often coincides with political involvement—a point that was underlined by the presidential election. The citizens of this nation will continue to disagree with one another on a wide range of subjects—including, perhaps, the question of how much we really disagree. What could be more American? —*THE EDITORS*

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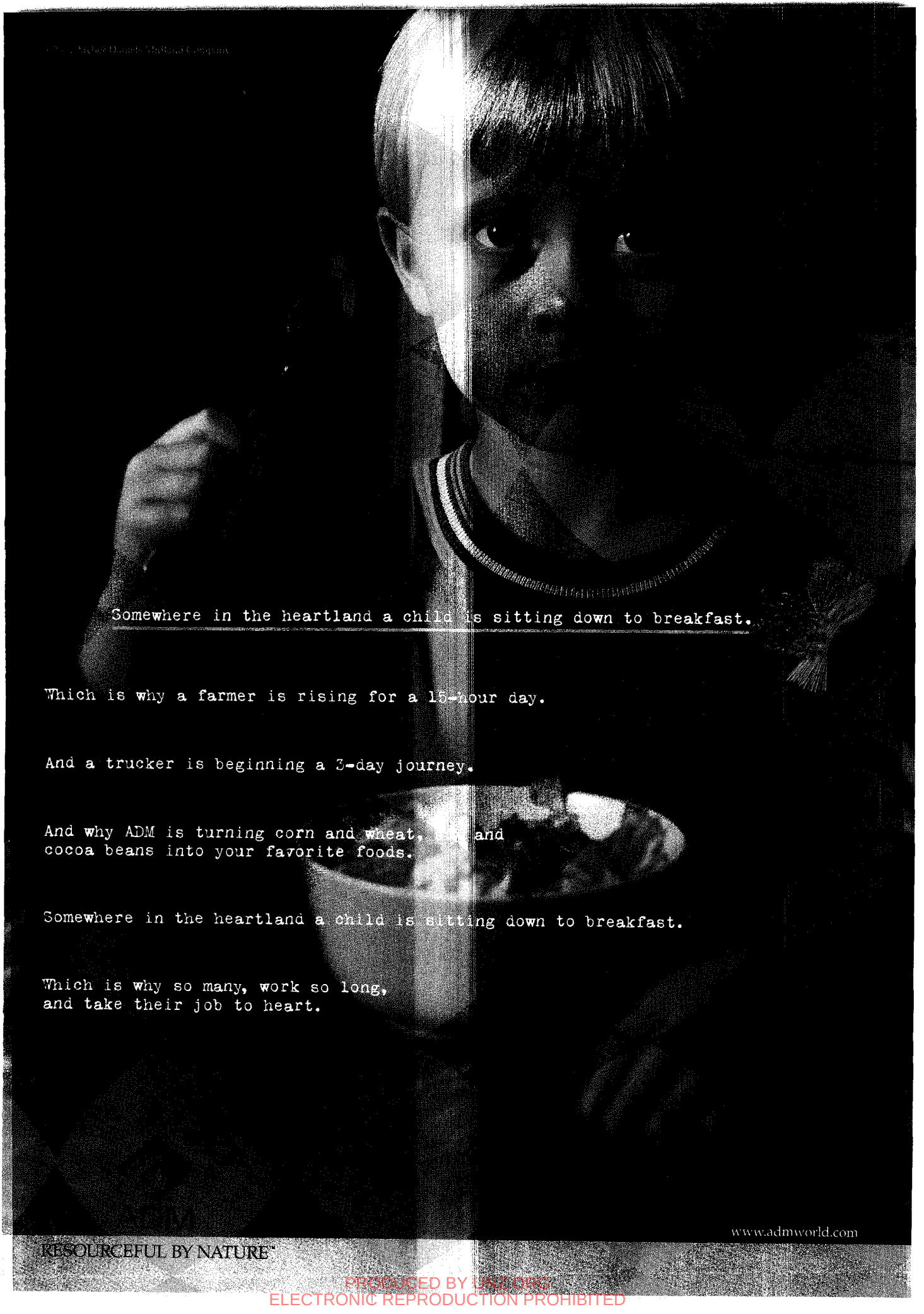

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Bipolar Disorder

A funny thing happened to many of the scholars who went out into the country to investigate the red-blue divide. They couldn't find it

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Have fear, Americans. Ours is a country divided. On one side are those who divide Americans into two sides; on the other are all the rest. Yes, America today is divided over the question of whether America is divided.

All right, I'm joking. But the joke has a kernel of truth. In 1991 James Davison Hunter, a professor of sociology and religious studies at the University of Virginia, made his mark with an influential book called *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America.* The notion of a country deeply and fundamentally divided over core moral and political values soon made its way into politics; in 1992 Patrick Buchanan told the Republicans at their national convention that they were fighting "a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself." By 1996, in his singeing dissent in the gay-rights case *Romer* v. *Evans*, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia could accuse the Court of "tak[ing] sides in the culture wars," and everyone knew exactly what he meant.

In 2000 those ubiquitous election-night maps came along, with their red expanses of Bush states in the heartland and their blue blocks of Gore territory along the coasts and the Great Lakes. From then on everyone talked about red America and blue America as if they were separate countries. The 2004 post-election maps, which looked almost identical to the 2000 ones, further entrenched the conventional wisdom, to the point where most newspaper readers can recite the tropes: red America is godly, moralistic, patriotic, predominantly white, masculine, less educated, and heavily rural and suburban; blue America is secular, relativistic, internationalist, multicultural, feminine, college educated, and heavily urban and cosmopolitan. Reds vote for guns and capital punishment and war in Iraq, blues for abortion rights and the environment. In red America, Saturday is for NASCAR and Sunday is for church. In blue America, Saturday is for the farmers' market (provided there are no actual farmers) and Sunday is for *The New York Times.*

An odd thing, however, happened to many of the scholars who set out to map this culture war: they couldn't find it. If the country is split into culturally and politically distinct camps, they ought to be fairly easy to locate. Yet scholars investigating the phenomenon have often come back empty-handed. Other scholars have tried to explain why. And so, in the fullness of time, the country has arrived at today's great divide over whether there is a great divide.

One amusing example: In April of last year *The Washington Post* ran a front-page Sunday article headlined "POLITICAL SPLIT IS PERVASIVE." It quoted various experts as saying, for example, "We have two parallel universes" and "People in these two countries don't even see each other." In June, *The New York Times* shot back with an article headlined "A NATION DIVIDED? WHO SAYS?" It quoted another set of experts who maintained that Americans' disagreements are actually smaller than in the past and shrinking.

Courageously, your correspondent set out into the zone of conflict. The culture-war hypothesis has generated some fairly rigorous scholarship in recent years, and I examined it. I wound up believing that a dichotomy holds the solution to the puzzle: American politics is polarized but the American public is not. In fact, what may be the most striking feature of the contemporary American landscape—a surprise, given today's bitterly adversarial politics—is not the culture war but the culture peace.

What, exactly, do people mean when they talk about a divided or polarized America? Often they mean simply that the country is evenly divided: split fifty-fifty, politically speaking. And so it indubitably and strikingly is. In 1979 Democratic senators, House members, governors, and state legislators commandingly outnumbered Republicans; since early in this decade the numbers have been close to equal, with Republicans slightly ahead. Opinion polls show that Republicans and Democrats are effectively tied for the public's loyalty. For the time being, America doesn't have a dominant party.

That may sound odd, given the Republicans' dominance in winner-take-all Washington. But in fact the 2004 elections confirmed that the parties are remarkably close to parity. The presidential election was tight, especially considering that an incumbent president was in the race. Republicans picked up four Senate seats, but the House of Representatives barely budged. The partisan allocation of state legislative seats (now close to parity) and of governorships (mildly favoring Republicans) also barely budged. As if to make parity official, in the

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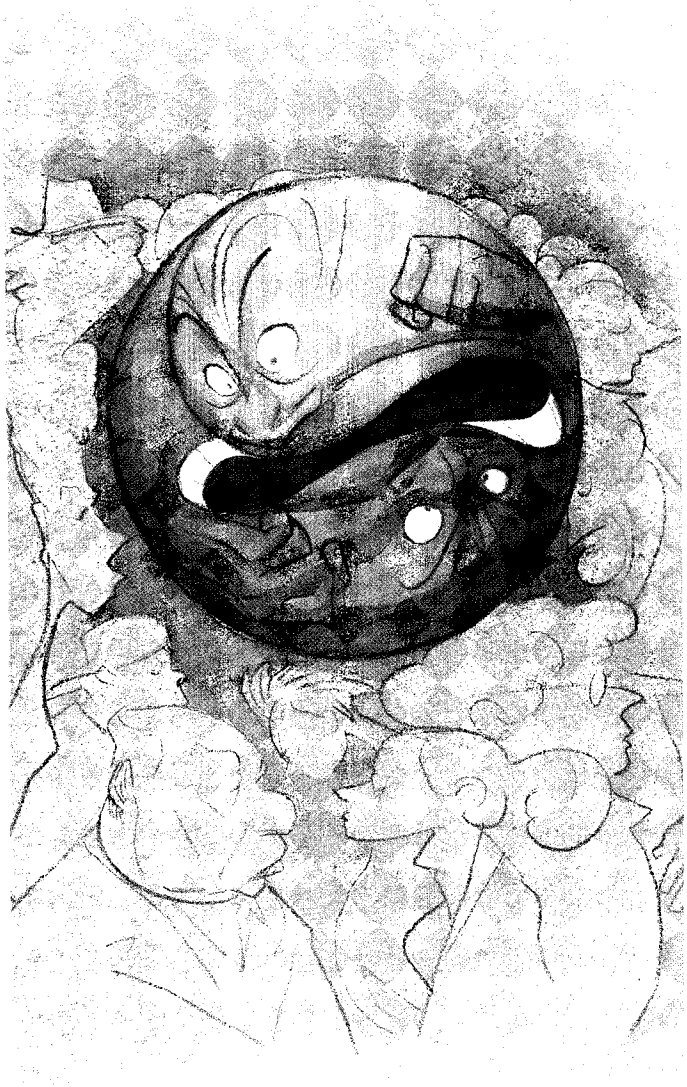

main exit poll voters described themselves as Democrats and Republicans in precisely equal proportions.

To political analysts, who live in a world of zero-sum contests between two political parties, it seems natural to conclude that partisan division entails cultural division. Sometimes they elide the very distinction. In his book *The Two Americas* (2004), Stanley B. Greenberg, a prominent Democratic pollster, opens with the sentence "*America is divided*" (his italics) and goes on to say, "The loyalties of American voters are now almost perfectly divided between the Democrats and Republicans, a historical political deadlock that inflames the passions of politicians and citizens alike." In a two-party universe that is indeed how things look. But we do not live in a two-party universe. The fastest-growing group in American politics is independents, many of them centrists who identify with neither party and can tip the balance in close elections. According to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, since the Iraq War 30 percent of Americans have identified themselves as Republicans, 31 percent as Democrats, and 39 percent as independents (or "other"). Registered voters split into even thirds.

On election day, of course, independents who want to vote almost always have to choose between a Republican and a Democrat. Like the subatomic particles that live in a state of blurred quantum indeterminacy except during those fleeting moments when they are observed, on election day purple independents suddenly appear red or blue. Many of them, however, are undecided until the last moment and aren't particularly happy with either choice. Their ambivalence disappears from the vote tallies because the very act of voting excludes the nonpartisan middle.

By no means, then, does partisan parity necessarily imply a deeply divided citizenry. People who talk about culture wars usually have in mind not merely a close division (fifty-fifty) but a wide or deep division—two populations with distinct and incompatible world views. It was this sort of divide that Hunter said he had found in 1991. One culture was "orthodox," the other "progressive." The disagreement transcended particular issues to encompass different conceptions of moral authority—one side anchored to tradition or the Bible, the other more relativistic. Not only does this transcendental disagreement reverberate throughout both politics and everyday life, Hunter said, but "*each side of the cultural divide can only talk past the other*" (his italics). In his book *The Values Divide* (2002) the political scientist John Kenneth White, of Catholic University, makes a similar case. "One faction emphasizes duty and morality; another stresses individual rights and self-fulfillment," he writes. The result is a "values divide"—indeed, a "chasm."

Both authors make their observations about culture and values—many of which are quite useful—by aggregating the attitudes of large populations into archetypes and characteristic world views. The question remains, however, whether actual people are either as extreme or as distinct in their views as the analysts' cultural profiles suggest. Might the archetypes really be stereotypes?

In 1998 Alan Wolfe, a sociologist at Boston College, said yes. For his book *One Nation, After All,* Wolfe studied eight suburban communities. He found a battle over values, but it was fought not so much between groups as within individuals: "The two sides presumed to be fighting the culture war do not so much represent a divide between one group of Americans and another as a divide between sets of values important to everyone." Intellectuals and partisans may line up at the extremes, but ordinary people mix and match values from competing menus. Wolfe found his subjects to be "above all moderate," "reluctant to pass judgment," and "tolerant to a fault." Because opinion polls are designed to elicit and categorize disagreements, he concluded, they tend to obscure and even distort this reality.

I recently came across an interesting example of how this can happen: In an August 2004 article Jeffrey M. Jones

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and Joseph Carroll, two analysts with the Gallup Organization, took note of what they called an election-year puzzle. Frequent churchgoers and men were much more likely to support George W. Bush than John Kerry. Non-churchgoers and women leaned the other way. That all jibed with the familiar archetypes of religious-male reds and secular-female blues. But here was the puzzle: "Men—particularly white men—are much less likely to attend church than are women of any race or ethnicity." How, then, could churchgoers prefer Bush if women preferred Kerry?

The answer turns out to be that most individuals don't fit the archetypes. Men who go to church every week overwhelmingly favored Bush (by almost two to one), and women who stay home on Sundays favored Kerry by a similar margin. But these two archetypal categories leave out most of the population. Women who go to church weekly, men who stay home Sundays, and people of both sexes who go to church semi-regularly are all much more closely divided. The majority of actual Americans are in this conflicted middle.

To know how polarized the country is, then, we need to know what is happening with actual people, not with cultural or demographic categories. One thing we need to know, for example, is whether more people take extreme positions, such that two randomly chosen individuals would find less common ground today than in the past. In the fifty-fifty nation does the distribution of opinion look like a football, with Americans divided but clustered around the middle? Or has it come to look like a dumbbell, with more people at the extremes and fewer in the center?

In an impressive 1996 paper published in *The American Journal of Sociology*—"Have Americans' Social Attitudes Become More Polarized?"—the sociologists Paul DiMaggio, John Evans, and Bethany Bryson, of Princeton University, set out to answer that question using twenty years' worth of data from two periodic surveys of public opinion. They found no change in the "bimodality" of public opinion over the two decades. The football was not becoming a dumbbell.

DiMaggio and his colleagues then looked at particular issues and groups. On most issues (race and gender issues, crime and justice, attitudes toward liberals and conservatives, and sexual morality) Americans had become more united in their views, not more divided. (The exceptions were abortion and, to a lesser extent, poverty.) Perhaps more surprising, the authors found "dramatic *depolarization* in intergroup differences." That is, when they sorted people into groups based on age, education, sex, race, religion, and region, they found that the groups had become more likely to agree.

The authors did, however, find one group that had polarized quite dramatically: people who identified themselves as political partisans. There had been a "striking divergence of attitudes between Democrats and Republicans." In 2003 John Evans updated the study using data through 2000. He found, for the most part, no more polarization than before—except among partisans, who were more divided than ever.

Could it be that the structure of public opinion shows stability or convergence even as individuals hold their opinions in more vehement, less compromising ways? If so, that might be another kind of polarization. Getting inside individuals' heads is difficult, but scholars can look at so-called "feeling thermometers"—survey questions that ask respondents to rate other people and groups on a scale from "very cold" to "very warm." In his recent book *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* the political scientist Morris P. Fiorina, of Stanford University (writing with Samuel J. Abrams and Jeremy C. Pope), finds little change in emotional polarization since 1980—except, again, among strong partisans.

A further possibility remains. Political *segregation* may be on the rise. Like-minded people may be clustering together socially or geographically, so that fewer people are exposed to other points of view. States, neighborhoods, and even bridge clubs may be turning all red or all blue. Is America becoming two countries living side by side but not together?

Fiorina and his associates approached that question by comparing blue-state and red-state opinion just before the 2000 election. What they found can only be described as a shocking level of agreement. Without doubt, red states were more conservative than blue ones; but only rarely did they actually disagree, even on such culturally loaded issues as gun control, the death penalty, and abortion. Rather, they generally agreed but by different margins. To take one example of many, 77 percent of red-state respondents favored capital punishment, but so did 70 percent of blue-state respondents. Similarly, 64 percent of those in blue states favored stricter gun control, but so did 52 percent of those in red states. Red-state residents were more likely to be born-again or evangelical Christians (45 percent, versus 28 percent in blue states), but strong majorities in both sets of states agreed that religion was very important in their lives. On only a few issues, such as whether to allow homosexuals to adopt children or join the military, did blue-state majorities part company with red-state majorities. Majorities in both red and blue states concurred—albeit by different margins—that Bill Clinton was doing a good job as president, that nonetheless they did not wish he could run again, that women's roles should be equal to men's, that

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the environment should take precedence over jobs, that English should be made the official language, that blacks should not receive preferences in hiring, and so on. This hardly suggests a culture war.

Red-state residents and blue-state residents agreed on one other point: most of them regarded themselves as centrists. Blue residents tipped toward describing themselves as liberal, and red residents tipped toward seeing themselves as conservative; but, Fiorina writes, "the distributions of self-placements in the red and blue states are very similar—both are centered over the 'moderate' or 'middle-of-the-road' position, whether we consider all residents or just voters." By the same token, people in both sets of states agreed, by very similar margins, that the Democratic Party was to their left and the Republican Party to their right. "In both red and blue states," Fiorina concludes, "a solid majority of voters see themselves as positioned between two relatively extreme parties."

Of course, one reason states look so centrist might be that most states aggregate so many people. A state could appear moderate, for example, even if it were made up of cities that were predominantly liberal and rural areas that were predominantly conservative. Indeed, media reports have suggested that a growing share of the population lives in so-called landslide counties, which vote for one party or the other by lopsided margins. Philip A. Klinkner, a professor of government at Hamilton College, examined this claim recently and found nothing in it. In 2000 the share of voters in landslide counties (36 percent) fell smack in the middle of the historical range for presidential elections going back to 1840. In 2000, Klinkner writes, "the average Democrat and the average Republican lived in a county that was close to evenly divided."

Of course, 36 percent of Americans living in landslide counties is a lot of people. But then, America has always been a partisan place. What John Adams's supporters said in 1796 about Thomas Jefferson, Bill Clinton pungently (and correctly) observed recently, would "blister the hairs off a dog's back." America is also no stranger to cultural fission. Think of Jeffersonians versus Hamiltonians, Jacksonians against the Establishment, the Civil War (now *there* was a culture war), labor versus capital a century ago, the civil-rights and Vietnam upheavals. No cultural conflict in America today approaches any of those. By historical standards America is racked with harmony.

My favorite indication of the culture peace came in a survey last July of unmarried Americans, conducted by the Gallup Organization for an online dating service called Match.com. Asked if they would be "open to marrying someone who held significantly different political views" from their own, 57 percent of singles said yes. Majorities of independents, Democrats, and (more narrowly) Republicans were willing to wed across political lines. Just how deep can our political disagreements be, I wonder, if most of us are willing to wake up next to them every morning?

A picture begins to emerge. A divide has opened, but not in the way most people assume. The divide is not within American culture but between politics and culture. At a time when the culture is notably calm, politics is notably shrill. Now, it bears emphasizing that culture peace, or war, is always a relative concept. America, with its cacophonous political schools and ethnic groups and religions and subcultures, will never be a culturally quiescent place, and thank goodness for that. Given the paucity of nation-splitting disagreements, however, what really needs explaining is the disproportionate polarization of American politics.

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Reasons for it are not hard to find. They are almost bewilderingly numerous. When I burrow through the pile, I end up concluding that two are fundamental: America's politicians have changed, and so have America's political parties.

"Who sent us the political leaders we have?" Alan Ehrenhalt asked in 1991. Ehrenhalt is a respected Washington political journalist, the sort of person who becomes known as a "veteran observer," and the riddle is from his book *The United States of Ambition: Politicians, Power, and the Pursuit of Office.* "There is a simple answer," he continued. "They sent themselves." This, he argued persuasively, was something new and important.

Ehrenhalt, who was born in 1947, grew up in the dusk of a fading world that I, at age forty-four, am just a little too young to remember. In those days politicians and their supporters were like most other people, only more so. Ambition and talent always mattered, but many politicians were fairly ordinary people (think of Harry Truman) who were recruited into politics by local parties

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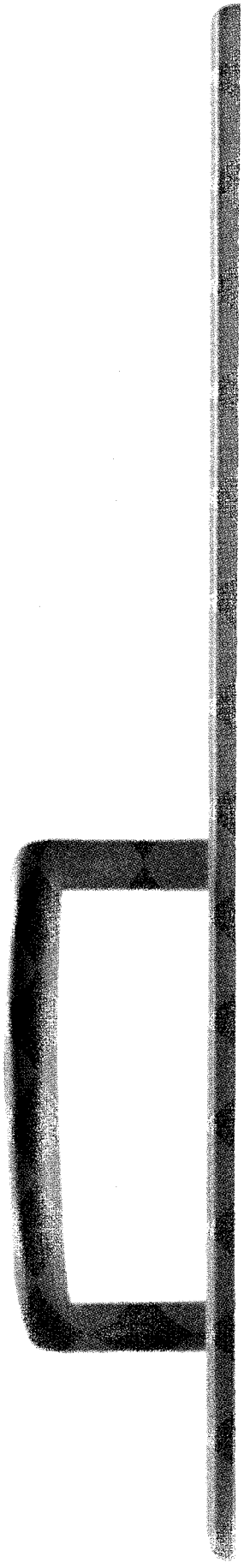

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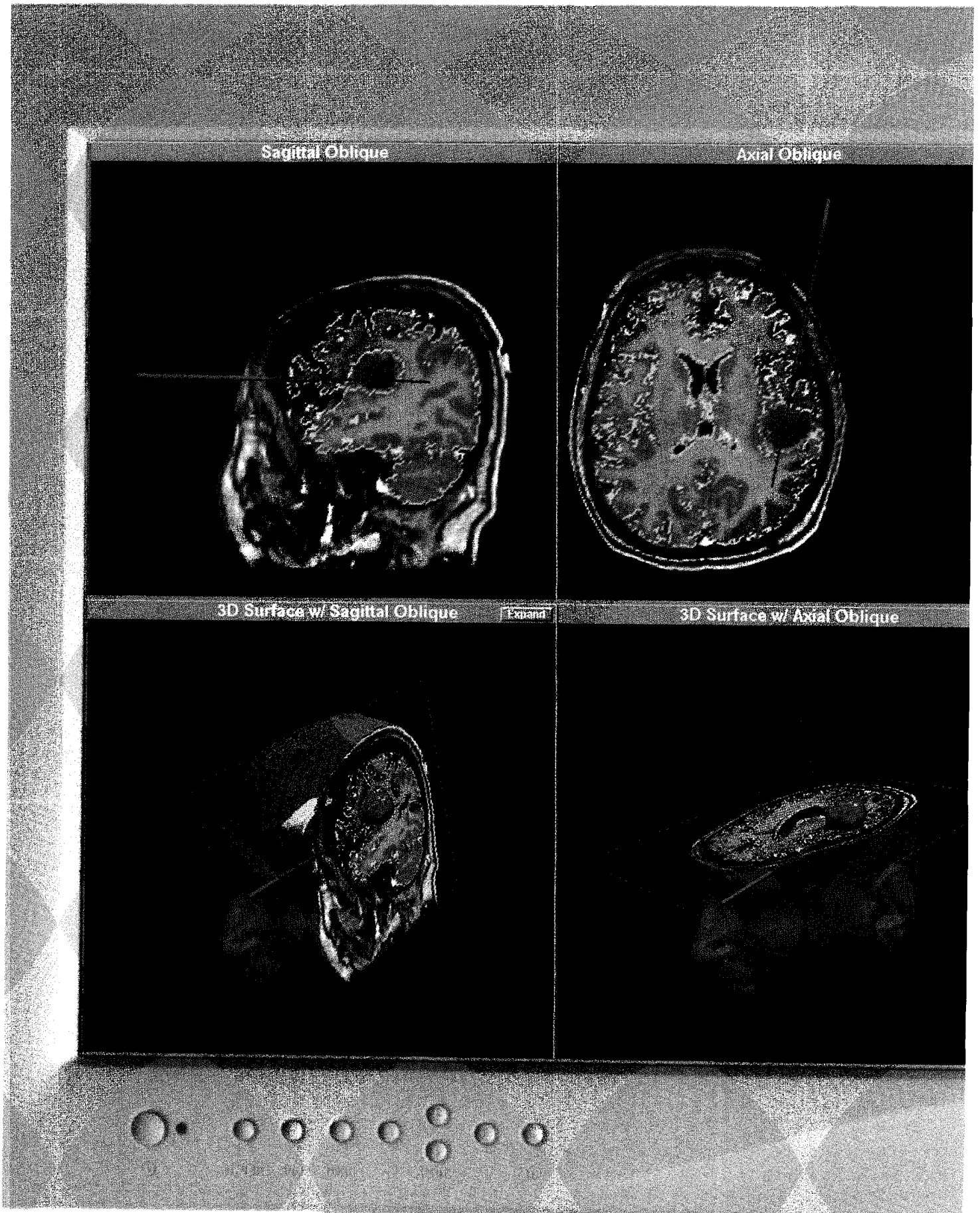

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or political bosses and then worked their way up through the system, often trading on their ties to the party and on their ability to deliver patronage. Party machines and local grandees acted as gatekeepers. Bosses and elders might approach a popular local car dealer and ask him to run for a House seat, and they were frequently in a position to hand him the nomination, if not the job. Loyalty, not ideology, was the coin of the realm, and candidates were meant to be smart and ambitious but not, usually, *too* smart and ambitious.

In a society as rambunctious and egalitarian as America's, this system was probably bound to break down, and in the 1960s and 1970s it finally did. The smoke-filled rooms, despite their considerable (and often underappreciated) strengths, were too cozy and homogenous and, yes, unfair to accommodate the democratic spirit of those times. Reformers, demanding a more open style of politics, did away with the gatekeepers of old. The rise of primary elections was meant to democratize the process of nominating candidates, and so it did; but hard-core ideologues—with their superior hustle and higher turnouts—proved able to dominate the primaries as they never could the party caucuses and conventions. As the power of the machines declined, ideology replaced patronage as the prime motivator of the parties' rank and file. Volunteers who showed up at party meetings or campaign offices ran into fewer people who wanted jobs and more who shared their opinions on Vietnam or busing.

The rise of primary elections was meant to democratize the process of selecting candidates. But ideologues proved able to dominate the primaries as they never could the party caucuses and conventions.

With parties and patrons no longer able to select candidates, candidates began selecting themselves. The party nominee, Ehrenhalt wrote, gave way to the "self-nominee." Holding office was now a full-time job, and running for office was if anything even more grueling than holding it. "Politics is a profession now," Ehrenhalt wrote. "Many people who would be happy to serve in office are unwilling to think of themselves as professionals, or to make the personal sacrifices that a full-time political career requires. And so political office—political power—passes to those who want the jobs badly enough to dedicate themselves to winning and holding them." Those people, of course, are often left-wing and right-wing ideologues and self-appointed reformers. In the 1920s the town druggist might be away serving in Congress while the local malcontent lolled around the drugstore grumbling about his pet peeve. Today there's a good chance that the druggist is minding the store and the malcontent is in Washington.

The parties, too, have changed. Whereas they used to be loose coalitions of interests and regions, they are now ideological clubs. Northeastern Republicans were once much more liberal than Southern Democrats. Today more or less all conservatives are Republicans and more or less all liberals are Democrats. To some extent the sorting of parties into blue and red happened naturally as voters migrated along the terrain of their convictions, but the partisans of the political class have been only too happy to prod the voters along. Whereas the old party machines specialized in mobilizing masses of partisans to vote for the ticket, the newer breed specializes in "activating" (as the political scientist Steven E. Schier has aptly put it) interest groups by using targeted appeals, often inflammatory in nature. (This past year the Republican National Committee sent mailings in Arkansas and West Virginia suggesting that the Democrats would try to ban the Bible.) Both parties, with the help of sophisticated computer software and block-by-block demographic data, have learned to target thinner and thinner slices of the population with direct mail and telephone appeals.

Perhaps more significant, both parties also got busy using their computer programs and demographic maps to draw wildly complicated new district boundaries that furnished their incumbents with safe congressional seats. Today House members choose their voters rather than the other way around, with the result that only a few dozen districts are competitive. In many districts House members are much less worried about the general election than they are about being challenged in the primary by a rival from their own party. Partisans in today's one-party districts feel at liberty to support right-wing or left-wing candidates, and the candidates feel free (or obliged) to cater to the right-wing or left-wing partisans.

It's not such a surprise, then, that the ideological divide between Democrats and Republicans in Congress is wider now than it has been in more than fifty years (though not wide by pre–World War I standards). The higher you go in the hierarchies of the parties, the further apart they lean. The top leaders on Capitol Hill are the bluest of blues and

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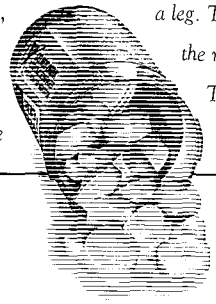

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Sources: CMS: National Healthcare Expenditures (2004); American Diabetes Association, "Economic Costs of Diabetes in the U.S. in 2002", Diabetes Care 26(3); 917:32 (March 2003); HCUPnet, Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (June 2003).

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the reddest of reds—left and right not just of the country but even of their own parties. (This is especially true on the Republican side. *National Journal*, a nonpartisan public-policy magazine and a sister publication of *The Atlantic*, rated House Speaker Dennis Hastert the most conservative member of the House in 2003; Majority Leader Tom DeLay tied for second place.) As party lines have hardened and drawn apart, acrimony has grown between Democratic and Republican politicians, further separating the parties in what has become a vicious cycle. The political scientist Gary C. Jacobson, of the University of California at San Diego, finds that Democrats and Republicans not only enter Congress further apart ideologically, but also become more polarized the longer they stay in Congress's fiercely partisan environment.

Not all of this had to happen—and indeed, happenstance has made matters worse in recent years. It is interesting to wonder how much less polarized American politics might be today if John McCain had won the presidency in 2000. Instead we got Bush, with his unyielding temperament and his strategy of mobilizing conservatives. Even more divisive was the fact that one party—the Republicans—has controlled the presidency and both chambers of Congress since 2003. In a fifty-fifty country, shutting one party out of the government can only lead to partisan excess on one side and bitter resentment on the other.

Centrist voters, of course, are unhappy, but what can they do? As Fiorina pithily puts it, "Given a choice between two extremes, they can only elect an extremist." Presented with a credible candidate who seemed relatively moderate, a McCain or a Ross Perot, many independents jumped at him; but the whole problem is that fewer moderates reach the ballot. The result, Fiorina writes, is that "the extremes are overrepresented in the political arena and the center underrepresented." The party system, he says, creates or inflames conflicts that are dear to the hearts of relatively small numbers of activists. "The activists who gave rise to the notion of a culture war, in particular, and a deeply polarized politics, in general, for the most part are sincere. *They* are polarized." But ordinary people—did someone say "silent majority"?—are not.

Well. A grim diagnosis. That it is largely correct is simply beyond question. I say this as one of the frustrated independent voters who feel left behind by two self-absorbed and overzealous major parties. In particular, the practice of gerrymandering congressional districts to entrench partisans (and thus extremists) is a scandal, far more insulting to popular sovereignty than anything to do with campaign finance. But that is not the note I wish to end on. Something may be going right as well.

It seems odd that cultural peace should break out at the same time that political contentiousness grows. But perhaps it is not so odd. America may be culturally peaceful *because* it is so politically polarized. The most irritating aspect of contemporary American politics—its tendency to harp on and heighten partisan and ideological differences—may be, as computer geeks like to say, not a bug but a feature.

America's polarized parties, whatever their flaws, are very good at developing and presenting crisp choices. How do you feel about abortion? A constitutional ban on same-sex marriage? Privatizing Social Security accounts? School vouchers? Pre-emptive war? Well, you know which party to vote for. Thanks to the sharply divided political parties, American voters—including the ones in the center—get clear alternatives on most issues that matter. By presenting those alternatives, elections provide a sense of direction.

Moreover, although party polarization may disgruntle the center (can't we be for stem-cell research *and* school vouchers?), it helps domesticate fanatics on the left and the right. Though you would be partly correct to say that the mainstream parties have been taken over by polarized activists, you could also say, just as accurately and a good deal more cheerfully, that polarized activists have been taken over by the mainstream parties. The Republican Party has acquired its distinctively tart right-wing flavor largely because it has absorbed—in fact, to a significant extent has organizationally merged with—the religious right. As Hanna Rosin reports elsewhere in this package, religious conservatives are becoming more uniformly Republican even as their faiths and backgrounds grow more diverse. On balance it is probably healthier if religious conservatives are inside the political system than if they operate as insurgents and provocateurs on the outside. Better they should write anti-abortion planks into the Republican platform than bomb abortion clinics. The same is true of the left. The clashes over civil rights and Vietnam turned into street warfare partly because activists were locked out by their own party establishments and had to fight, literally, to be heard. When Michael Moore receives a hero's welcome at the Democratic National Convention, we moderates grumble; but if the parties engage fierce activists while marginalizing tame centrists, that is probably better for the social peace than the other way around.

In the end what may matter most is not that the parties be moderate but that they be competitive—which America's parties are, in spades. Politically speaking, our fifty-fifty America is a divisive, rancorous place. The rest of the world should be so lucky.

Jonathan Rauch is an Atlantic *correspondent and a writer in residence at the Brookings Institution. His most recent book is* Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America.

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Shaken and Stirred

The United States is about to experience economic upheaval on a scale unseen for generations. Will social harmony be a casualty?

BY STEPHEN S. COHEN AND J. BRADFORD DELONG

It has become conventional wisdom that class politics has no legs in the United States today—and for good reason. Regardless of actual circumstance, an overwhelming majority of Americans view themselves as middle-class. Very few have any bone to pick with the rich, perhaps because most believe they will become rich—or at least richer—someday. To be sure, the issues of jobs and wages inevitably make their way into our political campaigns—to a greater or lesser extent depending on where we are in the business cycle. But they seldom divide us as much as simply circle in and out of our political life. Lately anxiety about the economy has been palpable, but for the most part it has not evolved into anger or found specific scapegoats.

Economic insecurity could well divide us in the future, however. We are on the cusp of an economic era whose challenges will be unfamiliar to most Americans of working age. It is likely to erode the psychological pillars on which class unity has rested in this country: personal economic stability for the middle class, and the promise of at least some upward mobility for most Americans. The most likely division—besides that between the truly rich and the truly poor—will be between those in the middle class who are able (through agility or luck) to manage economic risk and those who find themselves helpless before the economic pressures of a new age.

Once upon a time, or so it is said, America was a place with lots of upward but little downward mobility. In the really old, pre–Civil War days you could start out splitting rails, head west, make a success of yourself on the frontier, and perhaps even wind up as president. In the relatively recent, post–World War II expansion you could do well by landing a blue-collar job in a unionized manufacturing industry or a white-collar job at a large, stable American corporation such as IBM, AT&T, or General Electric—which offered job security, high salaries, and long, steady career ladders.

There was always as much mythology as truth to this image of America. Lighting out for the West was expensive; covered wagons did not come cheap. More generally, although many terms could be used to describe economic life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "stable" and "secure" are not among them.

But there was considerable truth to the image as well, particularly after World War II. Regardless of education level or family background, many Americans who valued stability and security really did have the chance to grasp it; jobs with "a future"—that is, with steadily rising wages and solid retirement plans—were plentiful. And even for many of those who were fired, the economic risks were fairly low: the unemployment rate for married men during the 1960s averaged 2.7 percent, and finding a new job was a relatively simple matter. During the first decades following World War II, to the astonishment of interviewing sociologists, a majority of Americans began to define themselves as middle-class.

This post–World War II period stands as a reference point in our popular economic history—a gold standard for rapid growth and shared prosperity. It lingers in our national memory, and remains an important source of confidence in the unity of our culture and the awesome power of our economy. But although it engendered our current economic expectations, our sense of "the way things ought to be," in reality the postwar era was probably an aberration, a confluence of events never before seen in our history and unlikely to be seen again.

Most obviously, it was an era defined by the isolation of America's continental market from the devastation of World War II. In the early postwar decades foreign competition exerted virtually no pressure on our economy. (In 1965, for example, imports of automobiles and auto parts came to less than $1 billion—about a fortieth of what they are today, after adjusting for inflation.) At the same time, domestic manufacturers benefited from an enormous pent-up demand for mass-produced goods: cars, washing machines, commercial aircraft, refrigerators, lawn mowers, television sets, and so on. New highways gave rise to new suburbs, and to a resulting construction boom.

These economic conditions, along with successful federal efforts to maintain full employment through loose monetary policy, created an environment exceptionally friendly to workers. With little foreign competition on the one hand and a very tight labor market on the other, American firms were willing and able to offer workers strong incentives—such as pensions and first-rate health insurance—in order to attract and retain them. (Generous tax breaks from the federal government encouraged the roll-out of these benefits.)

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Meanwhile, the Great Depression had given rise to a system of government programs and policies that came into full force and maturity only after World War II—among them Social Security, unemployment insurance, welfare, and high marginal tax rates. The rise of communism abroad could only have strengthened commitment to workers' welfare, as a means of demonstrating that the American capitalist system offered a humane alternative.

Thus favorable macroeconomic circumstances, the absence of foreign competition, and a historically unique political dynamic all combined to allow postwar America many of the benefits of social democracy without the costs. The economy did not stagger under the weight of ample benefits and high taxes. Americans—at least white male Americans—did not have to worry about tradeoffs between security and opportunity, because the United States offered both. And it seemed that this was the natural order of things.

The threat of downward mobility first hit America in a big way in the 1980s, when the old-line, unionized midwestern manufacturing companies found themselves under enormous pressure from foreign competition, in particular from export-oriented Japanese companies such as Honda, Toyota, and Komatsu. The result was a hemorrhaging of unionized manufacturing jobs and the emergence of the Rust Belt.

In addition, new technologies and consumption patterns were shifting the U.S. economy's center of gravity from skilled, unionized, mass-production industry—which fashions products from expensive materials and capital-intensive machinery—to services and retailing, where barriers to the entry of competitors are lower, labor costs more significant, and competitive advantage more reliant on squeezing those labor costs. The nation's largest private-sector employer today, of course, is not General Motors or Ford but Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is in many ways a fine company, but its strategic goals and constraints are quite different from those of the manufacturers of the 1960s. Between them the automakers and the UAW offered workers a fairly robust "social contract": pensions, good health care, high wages, long-term job security. Wal-Mart makes no such offer.

By the early 1990s the nature of unemployment had changed as well. As Erica Groshen and Simon Potter, of the New York Federal Reserve, point out, temporary layoffs have become less common. Instead companies under constant competitive pressure are more frequently making layoffs permanent—using advances in technology to eliminate some types of jobs altogether.

At the same time, the rising cost of health care and the falling rate of health insurance have left families much more economically vulnerable in the event of a serious accident or illness. Many Americans today are one lost job and one medical emergency away from bankruptcy.

We do not want to overstate how bad things are. Not even white males would be better off in the economy of the 1960s, when median real household incomes were only about two thirds of what they are today, and much of the medical care that we now fear we cannot afford was unavailable at any price. In a sense we've merely returned to a more natural economic state, in which jobs are not always secure and progress is not always assured. And we've done so while improving the opportunities and lifestyles available to most Americans. So far, in other words, we've adapted reasonably well to increased risk and reduced security. But we're not at the end of economic history—and the history that will be made in the coming decades is likely to be substantially more turbulent than what we've seen in recent years.

Although the impact of globalization on American jobs has been overhyped in the past, its impact in the future will be hard to exaggerate. Last spring saw a short political boomlet of worry over the offshoring of white-collar jobs to India, China, and elsewhere. In the next few years these issues will be raised at the political level once again—and loudly.

The basic storyline is simple enough: what formerly could not be imported now can be. A compelling parallel

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can be drawn to the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the steel-hulled oceangoing steamship and the submarine telegraph cable revolutionized international trade. Companies could now use the telegraph to tell their agents in distant ports what goods to ship; moreover, powerful steamships made it practical to export not only precious goods (such as rare porcelains, spices, and tobacco) but also staple agricultural and manufactured products: grain, hides, meat, wool, furniture, and machines (which would eventually include motor vehicles, computers, and consumer electronics). First in a great rush, and then at a somewhat more measured pace, industrial and agricultural workers the world over began to lose their jobs to more-efficient foreign competitors. Illinois could grow wheat more cheaply than Prussia could grow rye. Malaysia could grow rubber more cheaply than Brazil. Of course, displaced workers could generally find new jobs, sometimes better ones. And consumers benefited greatly from lower prices. But that did little to dim the spectacle of immediate dislocation. The expansion of international trade ushered in a century-long storm—though many Americans (perhaps owing to the anomalous calm following World War II) seem to remember only the recent gusts that have buffeted our heavy industries.

The transformation taking place today will have just as great an effect on the world economy. The transoceanic fiber-optic cable, the communications satellite, and the Internet are making much white-collar service work as tradable as anything else. Broadband cables and satellites can connect India or China or Bulgaria to the United States instantly, seamlessly—and almost without cost. A huge new swath of American jobs is beginning to become vulnerable to foreign competition.

When the offshoring of services truly hits (and it will stretch out over several decades), it is likely to deliver a much greater shock to the U.S. economy than the offshoring of manufacturing did. There are several reasons for this. First, in the 1970s Americans' incomes exceeded those of the Japanese by a ratio of about two to one. The ratio of American to Indian incomes today is more than ten to one. Economists will point out that the gains from trade will thereby be that much greater for the U.S. economy as a whole—and they'll be right. Indeed, more and greater openness will expand opportunities and raise incomes for some Americans, producing many highly visible winners. At the same time, the potential pay cuts for workers who lose out in rich countries will also be that much greater.

Second, the coming global trade in services will potentially affect a much larger proportion of the U.S. labor force. Even at its height manufacturing constituted only 28 percent of all non-farm employment, and large sectors of manufacturing (food processing, for example) are closely tied to sources of supply and thus immovable. Service jobs constitute 83 percent of non-farm employment in the U.S. economy today, and every job that is (or could be) defined largely by the use of computers and telephones will be vulnerable.

Third, the impact of foreign competition will be borne much more directly by American workers than by their employers. In the 1970s and 1980s foreign imports threatened U.S. companies and workers equally. The CEOs at GM and Ford were on the same "side" as the men and women who worked on the factory floor. The coming wave of economic dislocation will look very different: it will be something that American CEOs do to their own workers.

Not that they'll necessarily have much choice; offshoring will in many cases be necessary if American businesses are to remain competitive. Remember H. Ross Perot's "giant sucking sound"? In the early 1990s no one spoke out more strongly against the prospect of job loss caused by foreign competition. Yet on February 7 of last year the *Times of India* reported that Perot Systems was going to double its employment in Asia from 3,500 to 7,000—nearly half its total worldwide employment. If the economic logic of foreign outsourcing is so overwhelming that Ross Perot can't resist it, what American CEO will be able to?

None of this is to say that we face a future of permanent widespread unemployment. It is a truth universally acknowledged (except in campaign seasons) that the rate of employment in the United States is set not by levels of imports and exports but, primarily, by whether the Federal Reserve's monetary policy manages to settle aggregate demand in that sweet spot where neither unemployment nor inflation is too high.

Moreover, during the course of any single year or business cycle the effects of globalization on the U.S. labor market are small. Forrester Research has estimated that by 2018 some 3.3 million jobs in business processes are likely to go offshore. That's a little more than 18,000 a month—not a huge number in an economy of 140 million jobs.

But—and this is a very big "but"—even though imports and offshoring do not determine the number of U.S. jobs over time, they do powerfully influence the long-run level and distribution of real wages. Eventually the offshoring of service jobs will exert a strong downward pressure on wages and benefits in jobs that stay onshore, just as the offshoring of manufacturing jobs did in the 1980s. Essentially, the pool of workers competing for many service jobs will be increased by, say, several million English-speaking college graduates in India, who will work for a tenth to a fifth of a typical American salary.

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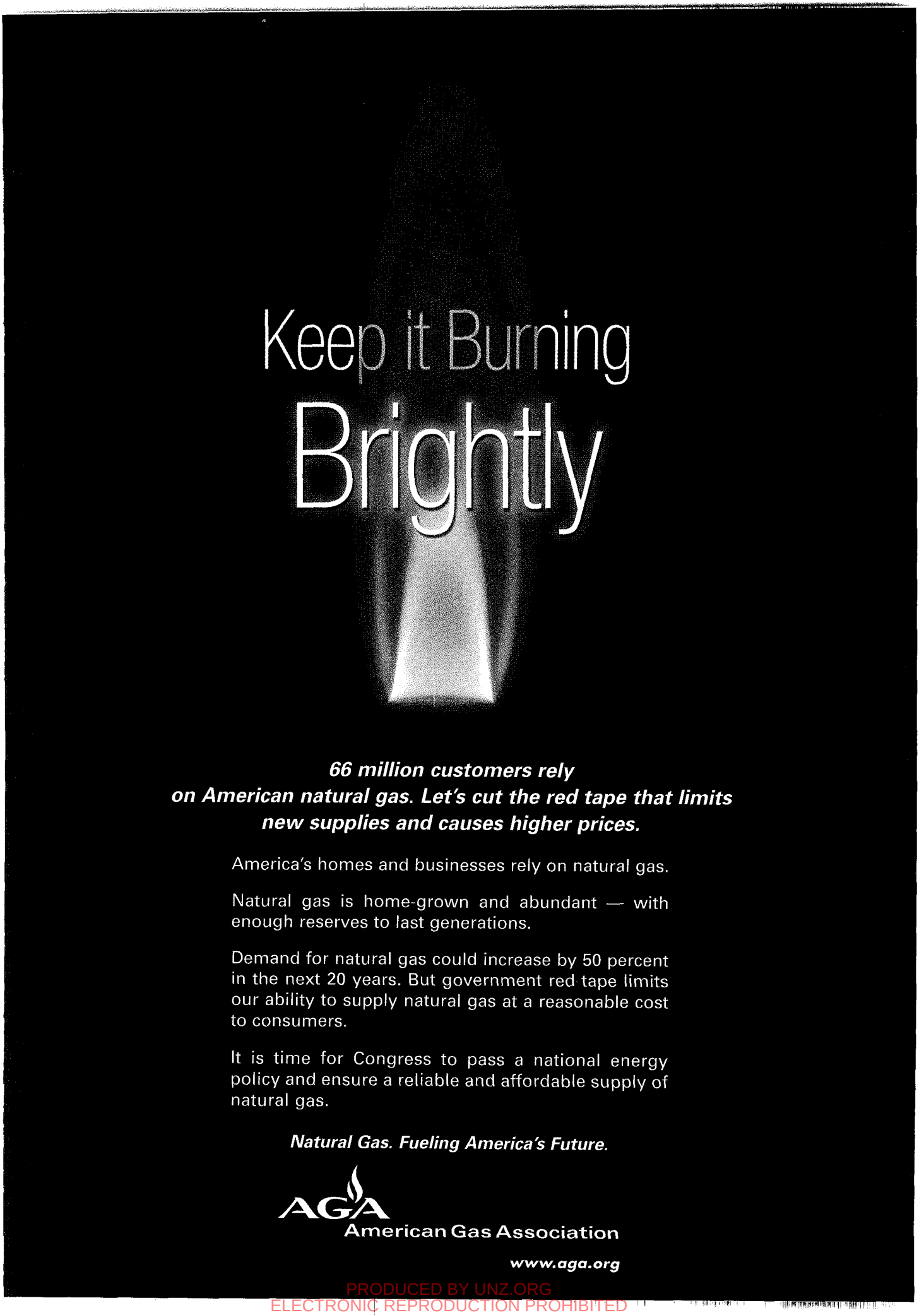

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In many cases the jobs in question are held by Americans unaccustomed to layoffs or reduced incomes. Often they are high-paying white-collar jobs. The people who hold them may believe that they are on top because they deserve to be: they are smart and industrious; they worked hard in school while others screwed around; they have been diligent and successful in their careers. These people are likely to become very angry when unexpectedly threatened by substantial downward mobility.

How will the country respond when a broad new array of classes and professions are exposed to downward mobility—particularly as others benefit from new opportunities? Will existing class fissures be exacerbated? What new ones might be created?

Winners and losers are unlikely to sort cleanly. People of similar background and training may see their fortunes diverge greatly depending on subspecialty, or on the presence or absence of some idiosyncratic ability that is hard to replicate. But one can make a few predictions. First, the new environment is likely to pit those who are most flexible—most able to shift jobs or careers, most able to absorb unexpected blows, best positioned to benefit from unforeseen opportunities—against those who are less so. The contours of such a divide seem predictable: young versus old, generalist versus specialist, people with savings versus those who depend on their next paycheck.

A second (and overlapping) split might open between those who are highly educated and possess complex skills and those who are merely well educated and skilled. An MIT education may still be hard to imitate abroad. Can the same be said of a finance degree from a state college?

Americans typically feel that increasing risk and rising inequality have hurt them at least as much as rising income has helped.

Third, a divide may occur between those—whatever their education or income level—who by disposition can tolerate unexpected income swings across a lifetime and those who abhor uncertainty.

The last group is probably large. The dissatisfaction resulting from falling wages is usually greater than the satisfaction resulting from rising wages. People are not wrong to be risk-averse; for middle-class Americans, just as for portfolio managers, life consists largely of trying to manage risk. This, the Yale political scientist Jacob Hacker thinks, is the source of middle-class Americans' unease with the current state of the economy—perhaps the primordial form of a sharper discontent to come. "Voters say the economy isn't getting better because, as far as they're concerned, it's not," Hacker writes. "And perhaps the best explanation for this perception is that Americans are facing rising economic insecurity even as basic economic statistics improve."

The median annual household income twenty years ago was about $38,000 in today's dollars. Today it is about $43,000—13 percent higher. Yet, at least in Hacker's analysis, Americans typically feel that increasing risk and rising inequality have hurt them at least as much as increasing income has helped. Yes, if they are middle-class, they have higher real incomes and living standards than their parents; but the incomes are known to be insecure, and the prosperity is felt to be fragile.

From one viewpoint, economic risk is the flip side of flexibility, entrepreneurship, and innovation—the very things America does best. In the 1980s, when Americans worried about whether the social organization in Japan's export-manufacturing sector (morning calisthenics, the company song, consensus, lifetime employment, and so on) might offer a better way of doing business, *The Atlantic*'s national correspondent James Fallows answered with a resounding no. What Americans needed, he argued, was to become "more like us" (the title of his book on the subject), not more like them: America's competitive advantage was rooted in disorder, constant change, flexibility, mobility, and entrepreneurial zeal. In 1991 Robert Reich, about to become Bill Clinton's first secretary of labor, looked at the tremendous expansion of manufacturing and other export-related employment elsewhere in the world and came to a similar conclusion. How, he wondered in his book *The Work of Nations*, could Americans preserve and accelerate economic growth if the market position and efficiency advantages of America's largest firms came under threat? He, too, concluded that we needed to shift our focus away from old-style stable mass-production employment to high-knowledge, high-tech, high-entrepreneurship fields. Workers, he argued, should expect to go back to school to learn new skills for new industries.

But embracing change and uncertainty in this way does not come naturally, in the United States or anywhere else, and the pollsters and media-affairs people of the Clinton administration soon told Robert Reich to be quiet: people did not like to hear their government telling them that their jobs were going to vanish.

Economists rightly say that the rising wave of trade-driven service globalization will, like the last waves of trade-driven manufacturing globalization, benefit Ameri-

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cans and foreigners alike. At home more will be won than lost. Fears that expanding trade will destroy jobs and disrupt the economy also need to be counterbalanced by the knowledge that reducing trade—or even failing to expand it—would reduce national wealth potential, destroy future jobs, and ultimately disrupt the economy even more. The social problems of a stagnant economy are far greater than those of a dynamic one.

But economists too readily dismiss concerns about those who lose out, saying merely that they can be compensated. In practice they seldom are. The United States simply does not make the investments needed to turn economic change into a win-win process—investments in retraining and rebuilding that would transfer some of the gains from the winners to the losers (who've done nothing personally to merit their loss). In the late 1970s and the 1980s little money was spent on Flint and Detroit in particular, and Michigan in general, to cushion the economic impact as Toyotas and Hondas came to America's shores. Producers in Japan and car buyers in Boston and San Francisco pocketed the gains, while producers in the Midwest absorbed the losses. As the Princeton economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman puts it, free trade is a salable policy only if accompanied by a well-built social safety net and confidence in full employment. But our safety net is full of holes.

Some companies have traditionally provided many of our social services, particularly in the form of health insurance and retirement support. Those companies will not continue to sustain that burden in the future. At the same time, our limited system of government benefits will not be adequate to the changes that we'll face—leaving aside the possibility that it may be weakened or removed completely, as some politicians propose. That system was designed to protect the poor and the aged, and to tide the rest of us over in case of (temporary) job loss. What we need now is far more career-transition assistance for the middle class, and perhaps more government funding and (surely) portability for the benefits—notably health care—that the private sector increasingly fails to provide. America's economy will need flexibility in order to compete, but we can provide this protection without sacrificing our flexibility.

Because we are facing an economic transformation that will hit not over the course of a few years but over the course of the next generation, we have time to do what needs to be done. We will need all this time, because the approaching economic shock will be greater in magnitude than anything in recent historical memory.

Stephen S. Cohen is a co-director of the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy at UC Berkeley. J. Bradford DeLong is a professor of economics at UC Berkeley.

Beyond Belief

The real religious divide in the United States isn't between the churched and the unchurched. It's between different kinds of believers

BY HANNA ROSIN

Richard Land is gloating, and who can blame him? When I called him a few weeks after the 2004 election, he said he'd been driving around his home town of Nashville with his cell phone ringing constantly, CNN on one line, *Time* magazine on the other—everyone wanting to ask the prominent Southern Baptist how his people had managed to win the election for George W. Bush. Yes, he told me, "we white evangelicals were the driving engine" of the president's victory. But then he veered into the kind of interview a quarterback gives in the locker room, in which he thanks the offensive line and the tight end and the coach and, well, really the whole team for bringing it home. "You'd be shocked," Land said, "at the number of Catholics who voted for this president. You'd be shocked at the number of Orthodox Jews, even observant Jews. This was a victory for all people of traditional moral values."

"Moral values." The phrase has turned into the hanging chad of the 2004 election, the cliché no one takes seriously. Do the debates over Iraq and the economy not involve moral values? Is everyone in the exit polls who didn't check that box a secular hedonist? As a way of explaining the outcome of the election, the "morality issue" has been amply debunked as all but meaningless.

But when Land uses the phrase to express his feeling of oneness with his Catholic (not to mention Jewish) brethren, it counts as a momentous development. Land does not, after all, come from some Quaker meetinghouse where all religious viewpoints are equally welcome. Rather, as the president of the Southern Baptists' Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, he comes out of a tradition that has called the papacy the "mark of the beast." (It's no coincidence that in the Left Behind series so beloved by evangelicals, a former American cardinal serves as lackey to the Antichrist.) Yet Land is not shy about announcing now, "I've got more in common with Pope John Paul II than I do with Jimmy Carter or Bill Clinton." Of course, he still has theological differences with Catholics, but "these differences are *in addition to* the basics," he says. "Together we believe in the virgin-born son, who died on the cross and was resurrected on Easter Sunday—really resur-

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rected, like *The Washington Post* could have reported it. We both say all human life is sacred, that marriage is between a man and a woman, that homosexual behavior is contrary to God's will." All this is just "more relevant," he says, "than whether I'm Catholic or Protestant."

Much of the post-election commentary about the "God gap" followed the old culture-war lines drawn by Pat Buchanan at the 1992 Republican National Convention, describing this presidential race as pitting the people of God against the godless. But although that has an epic sound to it, it's wrong—if only because there are far too few godless in the country to bring John Kerry to near parity. (Gallup polls show that only five percent of Americans don't believe in God or a higher power.) Rather, the election results confirmed an idea that sociologists have been dancing around for the past decade: that the more fundamental divide is *within* religious America, between different kinds of believers. Gradually the nation's spiritual map is being redrawn into two large blocs called traditionalist and modern—or orthodox and progressive, or rejectionist and accommodationist, or some other pair of labels that academics have yet to dream up.

For most of American history, of course, the important religious divides were between denominations—not just between Protestants and Catholics and Jews but between Lutherans and Episcopalians and Southern Baptists and the other endlessly fine-tuned sects. But since the 1970s fundamental disagreements have emerged within virtually all these denominations—over abortion, over gay rights, over modernity and religion's role in it. "There's a fault line running through American religions," Land says. "And that fault line is running not between denominations but through them."

Evidence for Land's claim pops up in newspapers every year starting around springtime, when many denominations hold their biennial or quadrennial meetings. In the past the subject of contention was typically abortion; of late it's more likely to have been homosexuality. The story line is remarkably consistent. A gay minister has been ordained, or a group of bishops have blessed a gay union. An internal trial is held, and sanctions are handed out. At the denomination meeting liberal protesters wearing rainbow stoles light candles; a conservative group called Solid Rock or First Principles threatens to break away and start a splinter faction unless the denomination holds fast to tradition. A vote is taken, and the denomination barely avoids schism. Last year the Episcopal Church got the most-dramatic headlines, after an openly gay bishop was ordained in New Hampshire and a coalition of congregations broke off from the American church. But similar rifts have appeared in the past few years within the United Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Lutherans—almost any denomination one can name. Nor is it just the mainline Protestant churches. At their June meeting the American Catholic bishops split over how strictly to hold politicians accountable for their positions on abortion. When Reform rabbis sanctioned gay unions, in 2000, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis issued statements objecting. And last year the Southern Baptists voted to pull out of the Baptist World Alliance, citing a move toward liberalism that includes tolerance of homosexuality and women clergy. The proximate cause was the acceptance into the alliance of a more liberal evangelical group, the Cooperative Baptists.

Every four years since 1992 a group of political scientists sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has attempted to track these shifting loyalties; with each survey, says John C. Green, a professor of political science at the University of Akron and a member of the group, "the argument for the culture war in religion gets more convincing." The survey subdivides the three largest religious groups—evangelicals, mainstream Protestants, and Catholics—into "traditionalists," "centrists," and "modernists." Traditionalists are defined as having a "high view of the authority of the Bible" and worshiping regularly; they say they want to preserve "traditional beliefs and practices in a changing world." Centrists are defined as wanting to adapt beliefs to new times, while modernists have unabashedly heterodox beliefs, worship infrequently, and support upending traditional doctrines to reflect a modern view. The three categories are similar in size (centrists are a little larger and modernists a little smaller) and have remained about the same size over the dozen years of the survey.

On a wide range of issues, traditionalists agree with one another across denominations while strongly disagreeing with modernists in their own religion. For example, 32 percent of traditionalist evangelicals and 26 percent of traditionalist Catholics say abortion should always be illegal, compared with only seven percent of modernist evangelicals and three percent of modernist Catholics.

The current divide first became apparent in the 1970s, when evangelicals, who had largely retreated from public life following the Scopes trial of 1925, re-engaged after *Roe* v. *Wade*. "As the issues heated up, each side began organizing around them; then candidates picked up on them," Green says. Soon the religious landscape seemed like a copy of the political one.

Perhaps the survey's most surprising finding is the degree to which evangelicals are splintering along the same lines as all other denominations. About half the evangelicals surveyed in 2004 defined themselves as centrist

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or modernist. This reflects a new movement of what are sometimes called "freestyle evangelicals." They are often married women with children who attend one of those suburban megachurches where the doctrine is traditional but the style is modern. Their morals are conservative but their politics are more heterodox, featuring considerable support for education and the environment. In time they may erode the stereotype of evangelicals as overwhelmingly conservative.

The divide between traditionalists and modernists is likely to widen in the coming years. In a recent study of twenty- to thirty-four-year-olds Robert Wuthnow, the head of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, found that ideological splits were much more pronounced than they had been in a similar study he conducted in the mid-1970s. In particular he found that political and religious views were tracking more closely, with the most religious more avidly pro-life, and the spiritual but less traditionally religious more avidly pro-choice.

Even some who are skeptical of an American "culture war" concede that religious traditionalists are gelling into a united force. According to Alan Wolfe, the author of *One Nation, After All* (1998), "The theological differences between conservative Catholics and Protestants that created five hundred years of conflict and violence have been superseded by political agreement. They are simply not interested in citing theology so long as they agree on abortion. People like Wuthnow are saying this has been going on for fifteen, twenty years. But there's an intensity this time around, much more so than most of us were prepared for."

That intensity was not entirely spontaneous. From his first month in office President Bush focused on the emerging religious split and exploited it, systematically courting traditionalist religious leaders—not only the usual Republican checklist of evangelicals but also conservative Catholic bishops and Orthodox rabbis.

According to the *National Catholic Reporter*, last year Bush asked Vatican officials for help enlisting American bishops' support on conservative issues. He held regular conference calls with Catholic conservatives, and hired Catholics to turn out the vote in their communities. He created an atmosphere that enabled a small group of outspoken leaders—including Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, Archbishop John Myers of Newark, Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis, Bishop Michael Sheridan of Colorado Springs, and Bishop Paul Loverde of Arlington, Virginia—to make their case that public positions can't be separated from private faith.

Chaput in particular has emerged as a strong advocate of a politically engaged Catholicism. A sixty-year-old Native American, he has written stinging columns in the diocesan newsletter and an op-ed for *The New York Times* arguing that "if we believe in the sanctity of life ... we need to prove that by our actions, including our political choices." A few weeks after the election he described his position to me at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in Washington, D.C. As a bishop, he said, he couldn't be partisan. "We are not telling [parishioners] how to vote," he explained. "We are telling them how to take communion in good conscience." In practice that distinction can be a little hard to discern. Although in the run-up to the election Chaput never told his audiences to vote against John Kerry, he did argue that the killing of the unborn was a "non-negotiable" issue, and then reminded them that Kerry supports abortion rights and Bush doesn't.

"We've tried one approach for thirty years—to be against abortion but measured and contextualized," he explained to me. "But it hasn't rooted out abortion." Chaput says he doesn't spend much time thinking about what his position means for politics. "We're not with the Republican Party," he told *The New York Times*. "They're with us."

A still more surprising alliance seems to have arisen in the past few years between the Bush administration and the normally insular Orthodox Jewish community. Here, too, the administration's outreach has been aggressive. Bush has held Hanukkah parties at the White House with invitation lists heavy on actual rabbis—Orthodox rabbis in particular—rather than on leaders of Jewish interest groups. In 2002 the Seattle Hebrew Academy, destroyed in an earthquake, was denied federal relief funds because it was a religious institution. Soon after, Bush signed an order allowing such institutions to compete for federal funds. That year the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the largest umbrella group for Orthodox Jews, began signing on with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Christian Legal Society to support some of the administration's faith-based initiatives.

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Bush closed the deal during the Republican convention last summer, with an event at the Waldorf-Astoria tailored especially to Orthodox Jews—the first such event ever held by a presidential campaign. Rabbis came in from all over the country. Senator Sam Brownback, of Kansas, and Tim Goeglein, from the White House, spoke about their commitment to Israel and values. Tevi Troy, a campaign official and an Orthodox Jew, also spoke. "That event generated a lot of buzz in the Orthodox community," recalls Nathan Diament, a spokesman for the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. "In the more insular segments of the community they don't watch TV, or get a newspaper outside the Orthodox papers. Suddenly there were headlines in the Jewish press saying the Bush campaign did this unprecedented thing, that for the first time they weren't lumping us in with the rest of the Jewish community."

The gambit worked. Thanks to Bush's attention (and, no doubt, his strong support of Israel), Hasidic enclaves—Kiryas Joel, north of Westchester; Lakewood, New Jersey; the Wickliffe suburb of Cleveland—voted as much as 95 percent for Bush, according to Diament, even though they had supported Al Gore by overwhelming percentages in 2000. (The enormous swings reflect voters' loyalty to the dictates of their rabbis.) Similarly, the Miami precinct with the largest Conservative synagogue voted 80 percent for Gore in 2000 and 57 percent for Bush this time around. A strong majority of Jews nationwide voted for Kerry, but Bush's focus on politically conservative rabbis helped increase his share of the Jewish vote from 19 percent in 2000 to 25 percent last year.

"We're starting to get an echo in our community of the divide Christians have, between traditionalists and progressives," Diament says. "We do, however, have a different theology than evangelical Christians, and that theology can lead to different positions on matters of public policy." For example, Orthodox Jews don't view "an embryo sitting in a petri dish" as having the same rights as a full human being, and the Jewish imperative to heal the sick puts them in favor of stem-cell research. But, Diament says, his community shares a general sense of the corruptive influence of the mainstream culture and appreciates "the role faith plays in Bush's life and the life of his community, and how he talks about it."

What does the country's religious divide mean for the future? Much depends on how modernists respond to the surge of activism on the traditionalist side. If religious America is truly undergoing a culture war, it is at the moment a lopsided one. "There's a sense of complete reversal from the late fifties and early sixties," says James Davison Hunter, the author of *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991). "Conservatives within denominations are so well mobilized, while progressives within Protestantism and Catholicism find themselves flat-footed, without any coherent course of action or any way to make sense of what's going on." Typically, Hunter says, evangelicals are wary of mainstream society, and prone to doomsday predictions. But he found them brimming with a "stunning sense of optimism" when he recently visited an evangelical church in Houston. "Their understanding of their own hopes and dreams about the culture were entirely linked to getting out the vote for Bush. They seemed very pragmatic, very pleased."

For the moment, at least. It's an open question whether religious traditionalists will maintain the level of political engagement they showed in the 2004 election. The greatest obstacle here may be not a modernist backlash but the burden of high expectations. Already there are signs that evangelicals may be headed for a crushing disappointment. Following Bush's victory, James Dobson, of the evangelical group Focus on the Family, declared that if the Republicans don't deliver on issues such as abortion and gay marriage, "I believe they'll pay a price in the next election." Similarly, Bob Jones III, the president of Bob Jones University, read an open letter to Bush in chapel: "In your re-election, God has graciously granted America—though she doesn't deserve it—a reprieve from the agenda of paganism. You have been given a mandate ... Don't equivocate. Put your agenda on the front burner and let it boil ... Honor the Lord, and He will honor you."

It's not hard to imagine that perhaps six months, or a year, or three years down the road, religious traditionalists will face frustration and a sense of betrayal by the political system with which they are now engaging so enthusiastically. It wouldn't be the first time. After the election the conservative luminary Paul Weyrich issued a letter to evangelicals exulting, "God is indeed a Republican. He must be. His hand helped re-elect a president, with a popular mandate." And yet only five years ago Weyrich, who in the 1970s helped found the Heritage Foundation and coined the phrase "Moral Majority," was disillusioned about conservative Christians' ability to influence the national agenda on abortion and other issues. "Politics has failed," he wrote then. His prescription at the time: "Drop out of this culture" and find places "where we can live godly, righteous and sober lives." In 2008 we'll see if Weyrich and other religious conservatives remain engaged or start dropping out again. ▲

Hanna Rosin writes for the Style section of The Washington Post. *She covered religion for the paper from 1998 to 2001.*

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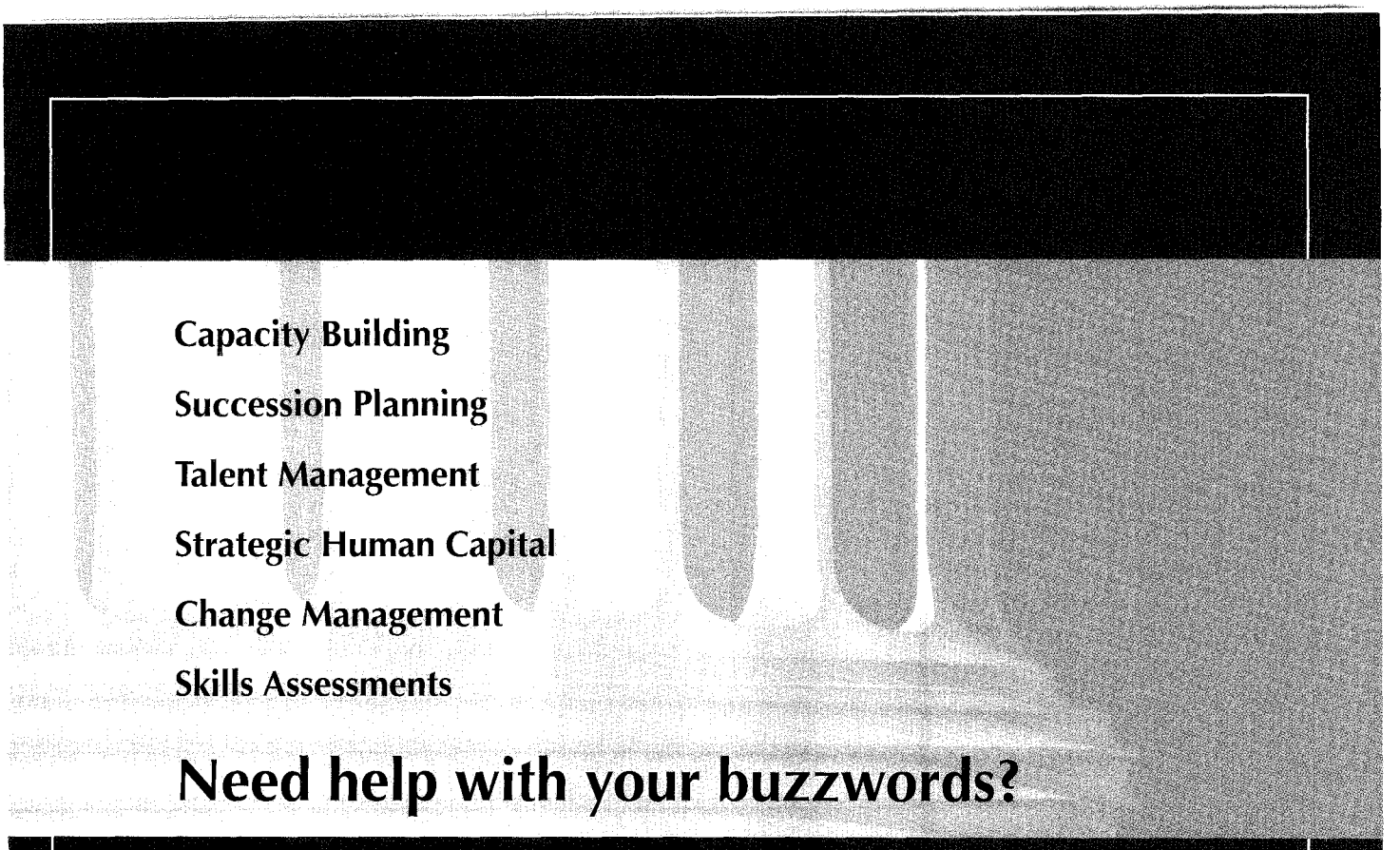

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The Massless Media

With the mass media losing their audience to smaller, more targeted outlets, we may be headed for an era of noisy, contentious press reminiscent of the 1800s

BY WILLIAM POWERS

One day last June, as a hot political summer was just warming up, a new poll was released. This one wasn't about which candidate voters favored for the White House. It was about which news channels they were choosing with their TV remotes.

"Political polarization is increasingly reflected in the public's news viewing habits," the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press reported.

> Since 2000, the Fox News Channel's gains have been greatest among political conservatives and Republicans. More than half of regular Fox viewers describe themselves as politically conservative (52%), up from 40% four years ago. At the same time, CNN, Fox's principal rival, has a more Democrat-leaning audience than in the past.

It's no surprise, of course, that Fox News viewers are more conservative than CNN viewers. But it is rather surprising that even as the network's audience is growing in sheer numbers, it is also growing increasingly conservative. The months following the poll offered further evidence of the ideological sorting of cable-news viewers. During the Democratic National Convention, in July, CNN came in first in the cable ratings, prompting a Fox spokesman to say, "They were playing to their core audience." Weeks later, during the Republican National Convention, Fox News played to *its* core audience and scored ratings that beat not only CNN and the other cable channels but even the broadcast networks—a historical first. When election day came around and George Bush won, it wasn't hard to predict that Fox News would again be the cable ratings victor: the conservative candidate took the prize, and so, naturally, did the news channel favored by conservatives.

Committed partisans on the left and the right have always had ideological media outlets they could turn to (*The Nation* and *National Review*, for example), but for most Americans political affiliation was not the determining factor in choosing where they got their news. The three national networks, CBS, NBC, and ABC, offered pretty much the same product and the same establishment point of view. That product was something you shared with all Americans—not just friends, neighbors, and others like you but millions of people you would never meet, many of them very unlike you.

For some time now Americans have been leaving those vast media spaces where they used to come together and have instead been clustering in smaller units. The most broad-based media outlets, the networks and metropolitan newspapers, have been losing viewers and readers for years. But lately, thanks to the proliferation of new cable channels and the rise of digital and wireless technology, the disaggregation of the old mass audience has taken on a furious momentum. And the tribalization is not just about political ideology. In the post-mass-media era audiences are sorting themselves by ethnicity, language, religion, profession, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and numerous other factors.

"The country has atomized into countless market segments defined not only by demography, but by increasingly nuanced and insistent product preferences," *BusinessWeek* reported last July, in a cover story called "The Vanishing Mass Market." To survive in this environment even old mass-media companies have had to learn the art of "niching down." Though national magazines have produced targeted subeditions for years, the slicing grows ever thinner. Time, Inc., the granddaddy of print media for the masses, has launched a new women's magazine just for Wal-Mart shoppers. Radio now has satellite and Web variants that let listeners choose their taste pods with exceptional precision. The fast-growing XM Satellite Radio has not just one "urban" music channel but seven, each serving up a different subgenre twenty-four hours a day.

Some niches are so small they're approaching the vanishing point. There are now hundreds of thousands of bloggers, individuals who publish news, commentary, and other content on their own idiosyncratic Web sites. Some boast readerships exceeding those of prestigious print magazines, but most number their faithful in the double and triple digits. Find the one who shares your tastes and leanings, and you'll have attained the ne plus ultra of bespoke media: the ghostly double of yourself.

To sensibilities shaped by the past fifty years, the emerging media landscape seems not just chaotic but baleful. Common sense would suggest that as the vast village green of the broadcast era is chopped up into tiny plots, divisions in the culture will only multiply. If everyone tunes in to a

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different channel, and discourse happens only among like minds, is there any hope for social and political cohesion? Oh, for a cozy living room with one screen and Walter Cronkite signing off with his authoritative, unifying "That's the way it is."

It's instructive to remember, however, that the centralized, homogeneous mass-media environment of Cronkite's day was really an anomaly, an exception to the historical rule. For two centuries before the arrival of television America had a wild, cacophonous, emphatically *de*centralized media culture that mirrored society itself. And something like that media culture seems to be returning right now.

When primitive newspapers first appeared in seventeenth-century London, they were just official bulletins about the doings of the monarchy. Royally sanctioned and censored, they had no ideology other than that of the throne. The first real American newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, came straight from this mold. It was put out by an imperial official, the postmaster of colonial Boston, and stamped with the same seal of governmental approval worn by its British predecessors: "Published by Authority."

That timid approach didn't last long in America, however. In 1721 a Boston printer named James Franklin, older brother of Benjamin, founded a paper called the *New England Courant*, which brashly questioned the policies of the colony's ruling elite. The very first issue attacked Cotton Mather and other worthies for their support of smallpox inoculations. The paper was on the wrong side of that argument, but the real news was that it made the argument at all. The *Courant* was "America's first fiercely independent newspaper, a bold, antiestablishment journal that helped to create the nation's tradition of an irreverent press," Walter Isaacson writes in his recent biography of Benjamin Franklin (whose first published writings appeared in his brother's paper).

Franklin's paper set the tone for the evolution of the media in this country. Outspoken newspapers played a crucial role in the Revolutionary War, and when it was over the leaders of the young republic consciously used public policy to nurture a free press. As the Princeton sociologist Paul Starr notes in his recent book, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications*, the United States dispensed with the European tradition of licensing papers and policing their content. Congress even granted American publishers lower rates for postal delivery, a valuable subsidy that made starting up and running a paper more economical.

Such policies, combined with the freewheeling ethos that had already taken root in the press, set off a wild journalistic flowering in the nineteenth century. By the 1830s newspapers were everywhere, and they spoke in a myriad of voices about all manner of issues. Alexis de Tocqueville, who was accustomed to the reined-in newspapers of France, marveled at all the variety.

> The number of periodical and semi-periodical publications in the United States is almost incredibly large ... It may readily be imagined that neither discipline nor unity of action can be established among so many combatants, and each one consequently fights under his own standard. All the political journals of the United States are, indeed, arrayed on the side of the administration or against it; but they attack and defend it in a thousand different ways.

In this the media reflected the political scene. The nineteenth century was a time of intense national growth and fervent argument about what direction the country should take. Numerous political parties appeared (Democratic, Whig, Republican, Free Soil, Know-Nothing), and the views and programs they advocated all found expression in sympathetic papers. In fact, the parties themselves financially supported newspapers, as did the White House for a time. Starr notes that according to a U.S. Census estimate, by the middle of the nineteenth century 80 percent of American newspapers were avowedly partisan.

This partisanship was not typically expressed in high-minded appeals to readers' better instincts. As Tocqueville wrote, "The characteristics of the American journalist con-

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sist in an open and coarse appeal to the passions of his readers; he abandons principles to assail the characters of individuals, to track them into private life and disclose all their weaknesses and vices." When Martin Chuzzlewit, the central character of the Dickens novel by the same name, arrives in the New York City of the early 1840s, he is greeted by newsboys hawking papers with names like the *New York Stabber* and the *New York Keyhole Reporter*. "Here's the *New York Sewer*!," one newsie shouts. "Here's the *Sewer*'s exposure of the Wall Street Gang, and the *Sewer*'s exposure of the Washington Gang, and the *Sewer*'s exclusive account of a flagrant act of dishonesty committed by the Secretary of State when he was eight years old."

Yet even though the media of this period were profuse, partisan, and scandalously downmarket, they were at the same time a powerful amalgamator that encouraged participatory democracy and forged a sense of national identity. Michael Schudson, a professor of communication and sociology at the University of California at San Diego and the author of *The Sociology of News* (2003), says that the rampant partisanship displayed by newspapers "encouraged people to be attentive to their common enterprise of electing representatives or presidents." Commenting that "politics was the best entertainment in town in the middle of the 19th century," Schudson compares its effect to that of sports today. "Professional baseball is an integrative mechanism even though it works by arousing very partisan loyalties," he says. In other words, newspapers helped pull the country together not by playing down differences and pretending everyone agreed but by celebrating and exploiting the fact that people didn't. It's the oldest American paradox: nothing unifies like individualism.

Partisan and scandalously downmarket, the nineteenth-century media nonetheless helped forge a sense of national identity.

We tend to think of the rise of the modern mass media as primarily a function of technology: the advent of television, for example, enabled broadcasters to reach tens of millions of Americans, but the cost of entry was high enough to sharply limit the number of networks. However, technology was only one of several factors that determined the character of the media establishment that arose in the United States after World War II. Beginning in the nineteenth century the idea of objectivity began to cross over from science into business and popular culture. As the historian Scott Sandage notes in his new book, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, a whole new industry rose up in nineteenth-century New York when a handful of creative entrepreneurs discovered they could gather "objective" information about businesses and people (the precursor of modern-day credit ratings) and sell it to other businesses for a profit. Soon journalists, including the muckrakers of the Progressive Era, were embracing a similar notion of objective, irrefutable fact. When the Washington journalist Walter Lippmann wrote in the 1920s that "good reporting requires the exercise of the highest of scientific virtues," and called for the founding of journalistic research institutes, he was, as Starr notes, codifying a standard of disinterested inquiry that would influence generations of journalists to come.

At the same time, a federal government that had once used policy to encourage the growth of a free press now faced a very different challenge. Unlike newspapers, the public airwaves were a finite resource, and someone had to decide how to dole it out. The solution was a federal regulatory structure that sought to ensure fairness but could never offer the ease of access or the expressive freedom of the press. (Not that the networks necessarily wanted the latter; in order to pull in the large audiences that ad buyers demanded, all strove for a safe neutrality that offended no one.) For these reasons, although the broadcast media reached more people, the range of content they offered was actually more constricted than that of the print media that preceded them.

Finally, the political culture of the 1940s and 1950s discouraged extremism. The two major political parties of that period certainly had their differences, but they shared a basic set of beliefs about the country's priorities. Politics hewed to the center, and the media both reflected and reinforced this tendency. The centrist, "objective" networks and large newspapers didn't just *cover* the political establishment; they were an essential part of it. The anchormen who appeared on television and the columnists of the great papers were effectively spokesmen for the ruling postwar elite. (On occasion literally so: Lippmann, the great proponent of objectivity, worked with his fellow reporter James Reston on a famous speech by Senator Arthur Vandenberg; both journalists then turned around to write about the speech for their respective papers.)

That establishment consensus exploded in the 1960s and 1970s, with Vietnam and Watergate, but the mass media hung on for a few decades, a vestigial reminder of what had been. The Reagan era and the end of the Cold War dealt the old politico-media structure the final blows. In

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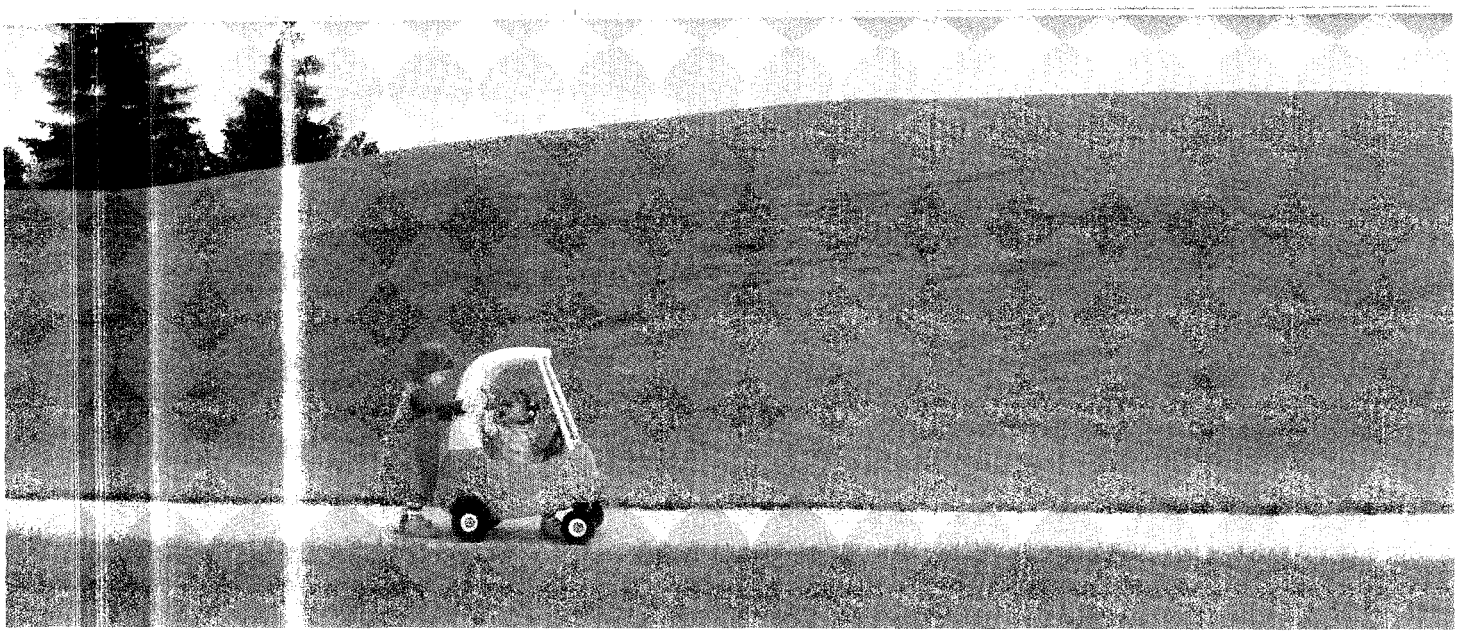

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the 1990s partisan politics really took hold in Washington, and again the news media followed suit. The demise of the postwar consensus made the mass media's centrism obsolete. Long-simmering conservative resentment of the mainstream media fueled the rise of Rush Limbaugh and Fox News. Their success, in turn, has lately inspired efforts on the left to create avowedly liberal radio and cable outlets.

Socially, too, our fragmented media are to this era what James Franklin's newspaper was to the 1720s and the CBS evening news was to the 1950s. The cultural sameness and conformity that prevailed after World War II—the era of *Father Knows Best* and Betty Crocker—have been replaced by a popular pursuit of difference and self-expression. In explaining why McDonald's has shifted a significant portion of its advertising into niches, an executive of the company told *BusinessWeek*, "From the consumer point of view, we've had a change from 'I want to be normal' to 'I want to be special.'" In a mass-media world it's hard to be special. But in the land of niches it's easy. What is blogging if not a celebration of the self?

The "Trust us, we know better" ethos that undergirded the broadcast era today seems increasingly antique. If red and blue America agree on anything, it's that they don't believe the media. To traditionalists worried about the future of news, this attitude reflects a corrosive cynicism. But in another way it's much like the skepticism that animates great journalism. As the media have become more transparent, and suffered their own scandals, the public has learned to think about the news the same way a good journalist would—that is, to doubt everything it's told.

Although network ratings continue to plummet, there's still evidence elsewhere of an enduring demand for the sort of connectedness that only broad-based media can offer. For the six months that ended last September 30 many of America's largest newspapers saw the now customary declines in circulation. But among those that saw increases were the only three with a national subscriber base: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. The presidential debates last year drew impressive audiences to the broadcast networks, suggesting that although Americans no longer go to mass outlets out of habit, they will go by choice when there's good reason. In one of those debates Senator John Kerry cracked a Tony Soprano joke, and it was safe to assume that most viewers got the allusion. When we rue the passing of mass togetherness, we often forget that the strongest connective tissue in modern culture is entertainment—a mass medium if ever there was one.

Moreover, for all the pointed criticism and dismissive eye-rolling that niche and mass outlets direct each other's way, the two are becoming more and more symbiotic. Where would the *Drudge Report* and the blogging horde be without *The New York Times*, CBS News, and *The Washington Post*? Were it not for the firsthand reporting offered by those media dinosaurs, the Internet crowd would have nothing to talk about. Conversely, where would the Web versions of mass outlets be without the traffic that is directed their way by the smaller players? If there's a new media establishment taking form, it's shaped like a pyramid, with a handful of mass outlets at the top and innumerable niches supporting them from below, barking upward.

Whenever critics of the new media worry about the public's clustering in niches, there's an unspoken assumption that viewers watch only one outlet, as was common thirty years ago—that is, that there are Fox people and CNN people, and never the twain shall meet. But the same Pew poll that showed the increasingly ideological grouping of cable audiences revealed that most Americans watch the news with remote at the ready, poised to dart away at any moment. Pew also detected an enormous affinity for "inadvertent" news consumption: a large majority of Internet users from almost all demographic groups say that while online they encounter news unexpectedly, when they aren't even looking for it. "Fully 73% of Internet users come across the news this way," Pew reported, "up from 65% two years ago, and 55% as recently as 1999." Thus it appears that one of the great joys of newspaper reading—serendipitous discovery—lives on.

And although much changes in the media over time, there are some eternal truths. Most outlets crave two things, money and impact, and the easiest path to both is the old-fashioned one: grow your audience. Ambitious niches will always seek to become larger, and in so doing to attract a more diverse audience. It's only a matter of time before the first mass blog is identified, celebrated, and showered with minivan ads.

Finally, there's no substantive evidence yet that the rise of the niches is bad for democracy. The fractious, disunited, politically partisan media of the nineteenth century heightened public awareness of politics, and taught the denizens of a new democracy how to be citizens. Fast forward to the present. The United States just held an election that was covered by noisy, divisive, often thoroughly disreputable post-broadcast-era media. And 120 million people, 60 percent of eligible voters, showed up to cast their ballots—a higher percentage than have voted in any election since 1968. Maybe we're on to something. A

William Powers is a columnist for National Journal *and a former reporter for* The Washington Post. *He writes frequently about the media, politics, and culture.*

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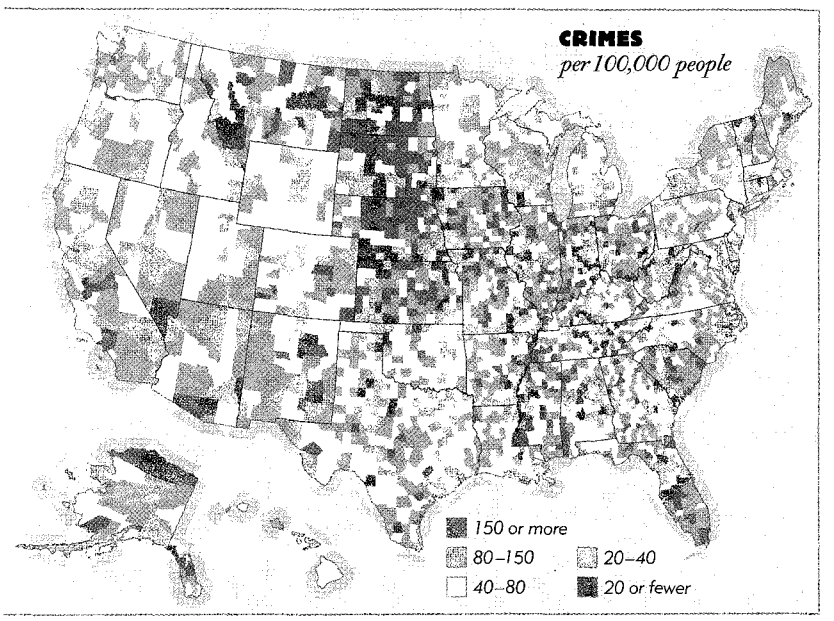
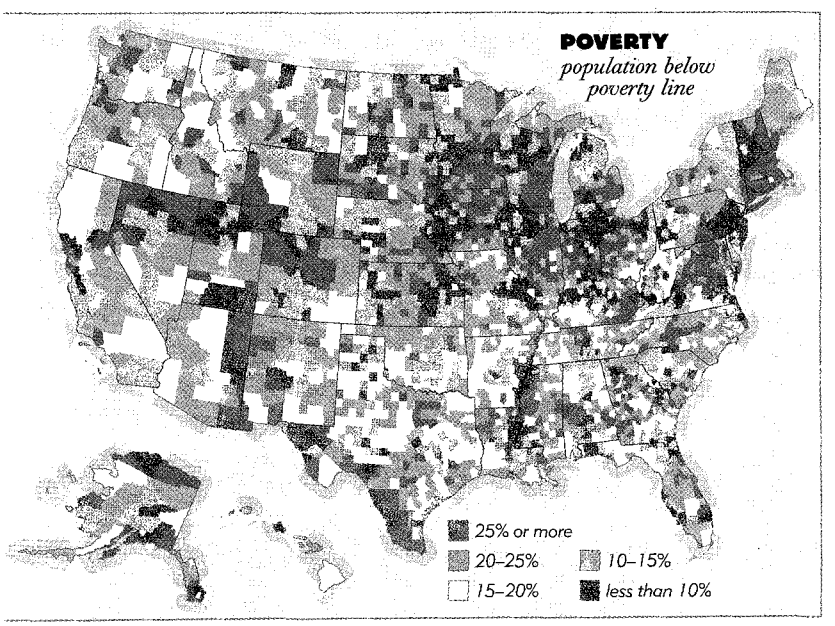
Continental Divides

The Crescent of Crime, the Spousal Spine, the Divorce Coasts, the Righteous Region, and other sources of national greatness

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

The secret to America's greatness is diversity. But America can't be diverse without divisions. And we are a divided nation. We've recently been through one of the bitterest, most hard-fought and polarizing contests of modern times. As a lone Yankees fan in New England, I can attest to the passions involved.





Maybe the real secret to America's greatness is that we hate one another. Consider the enmity between unions in the smokestack industries and lovers of the Kyoto Protocol, between feminists and sexually predatory chief executives, between Hispanics and blacks, between blacks and Jews. Put them together and you get the power of the Democratic Party. Likewise with Republicans. Their might is dependent on alliances of mutual distaste: country cousin and country club, white collar and white trash, Rotary and Davos, Neanderthal know-nothings and neocon know-it-alls, fans of Pat Robertson and fans of Pat Buchanan.

In an attempt to understand our source of national greatness, *The Atlantic* presents a series of maps illustrating some of America's less examined contrasts and clashes. The recent annual data on which the maps are based come from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Audit Bureau of Circulations, the Uniform Crime Report, and a company called Applied Geographic Solutions, or AGS. AGS provides demographic and marketing data to business and industry. The fact that Americans don't agree not only makes us strong, it makes us money.

The statistical pictures displayed here are neither detailed nor exact, and should be interpreted with caution. But what fun would that be? By applying hasty generalization, unconscious prejudice, and invidious comparison, we can start all sorts of arguments.

For example, what is the connection between poverty and crime? Some of the poorest parts of Arizona are some of the safest. Ditto in Missouri and West Virginia, yet not in Alabama and Mississippi. The poor border regions of Texas have few crimes. The slightly less poor border regions of New Mexico, Arizona, and California have plenty. Alabama and Georgia contain more poor counties than North and South Carolina, but the Carolinas report more criminal activity—although this may be a Barney Fife thing. Washington State appears to be crime-ridden. Microsoft monopoly practices?

The impecunious citizens of eastern Montana and the Dakotas are law-abiding. The prosperous

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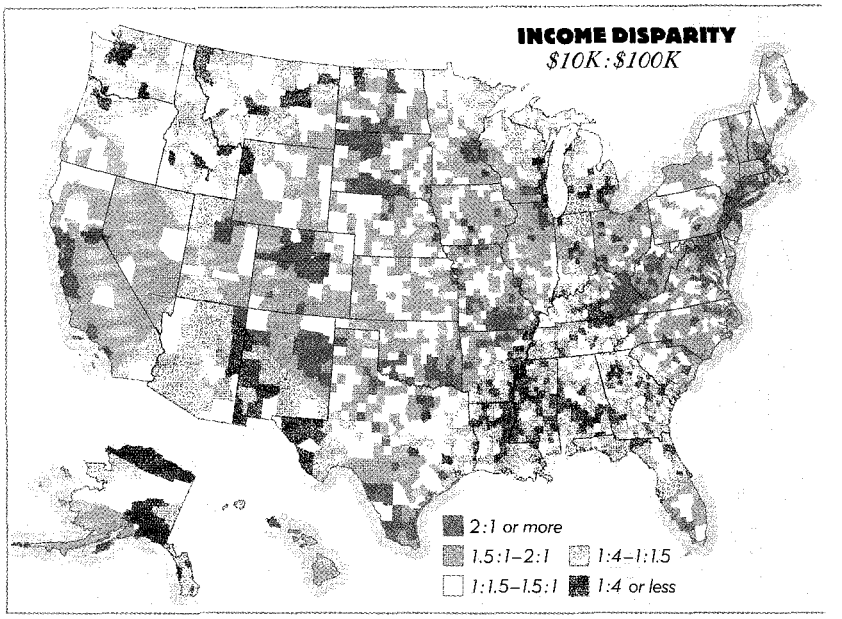
citizens of Florida are otherwise. Maybe retirees are America's secret criminal class. This would explain the felonious Sunshine State and the great American Crescent of Crime that begins in seniors-friendly New Mexico, sweeps through the golden-age communities of Arizona and southern Nevada, and continues up the Winnebago-frequented Pacific Coast. The services of Batman (getting on in years himself) are no longer needed in the Gotham metropolitan area. He should move to Miami, Las Vegas, or Palmdale, California.

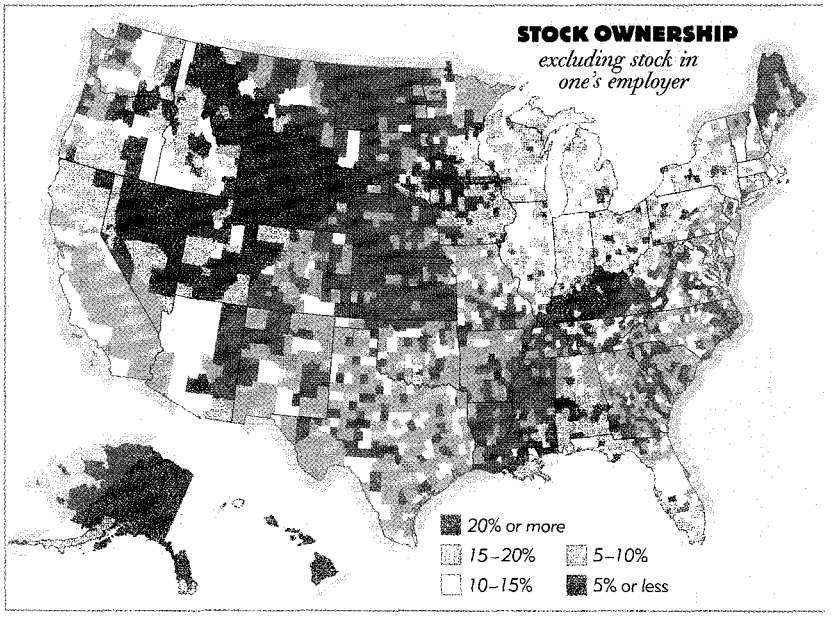
Other causes of crime are harder to postulate. Why the relative lawlessness of Minnesota compared with Wisconsin and Iowa? Has Garrison Keillor been sugarcoating his stories about Lake Wobegon? Is Eminem responsible for Michigan's Midwestern Malfeasance? And why is there a tiny dot of red in the barely populated extreme northeast of Vermont? Moose gangs?

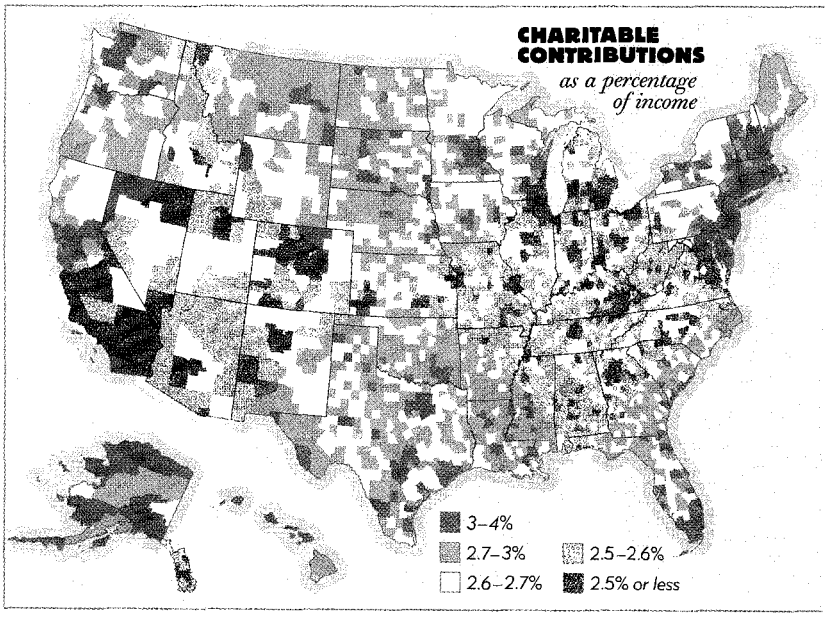
The maps may not show the cause of crime, but they do show the cause of poverty: obviously, it's the equitable distribution of wealth. A low incidence of poverty is seen in places where the ratio of households with a $10,000 annual income to households with a $100,000 annual income is 1:4 or less. Of course, there may *be* no households with a $10,000 annual income in those places. One way to get rid of poverty is to price the poor out of the neighborhood.

Wealth is very evenly distributed in areas where there isn't any. These aren't necessarily the expected areas. Residents of the northern Plains states, thought to be rugged, turn out to be ragged. The struggling Rust Belt has little poverty and extensive concentrations of wealth. The booming Sun Belt and the vibrant Southwest encompass the majority of America's poor counties. The liberal Northeast (where poverty is blamed for bad behavior) and the conservative heartland (where bad behavior is blamed for poverty) have one thing in common: not too many poor. For all that's been said about the plight of farmers, the Farm Belt is doing okay. Maybe those Willie Nelson benefit concerts worked. The border with Mexico is understandably poor. But less understandably, so are long stretches of the border with Canada. We don't hear much about NAFTA anymore, do we?

The maps do not show, unfortunately, the cause of getting rich. Investment in common stock doesn't seem to explain it. Clusters of stock ownership are so







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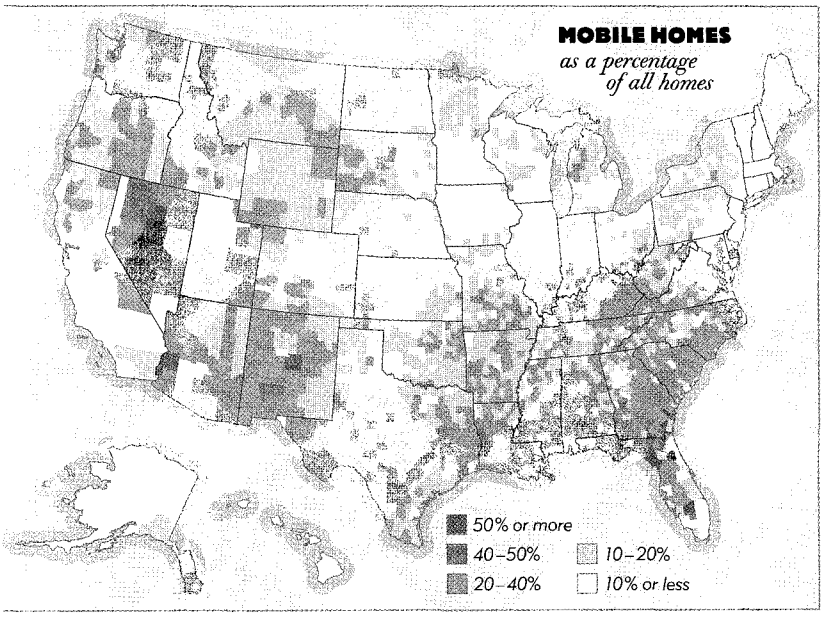
widely and strangely scattered that one suspects the operation of a brokerage boiler room making random hard-sell phone solicitations. The salesmen seem to have particularly good sucker lists for North Carolina, Colorado, Idaho, Washington State, and Harney County, Oregon. But Californians, bemoaning the loss in value of their Silicon Valley dot-com shares, do not, in fact, seem to own many.

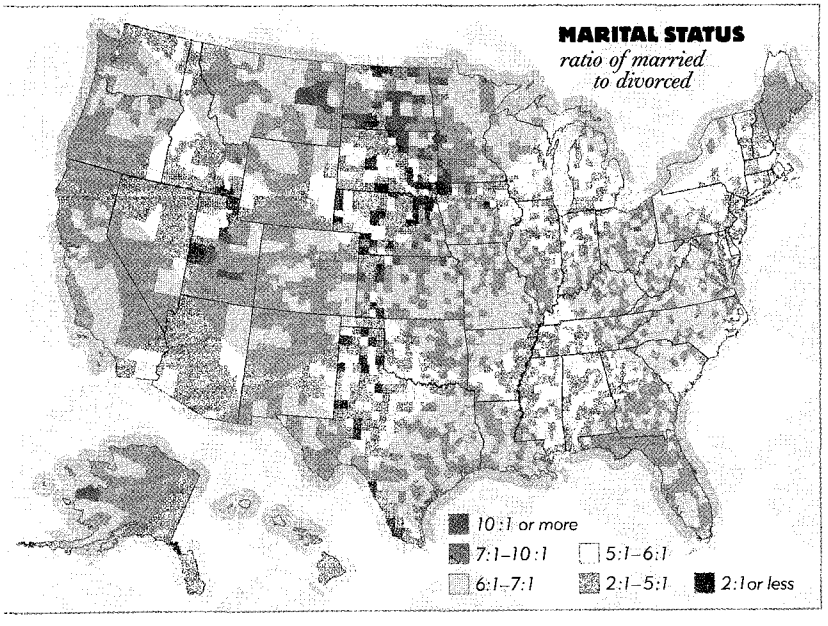
California is—in this as in other respects—a mixed-up state. There's considerable poverty in the north, the south, and the Central Valley, and great wealth along the coast and in the Sierra Nevada. The proximity of surplus to need does not result in philanthropy. The big shots aren't sharing.

The big shots aren't sharing anywhere. The eastern rich Democrats and the western rich Republicans seem to agree that charity should come from somewhere other than them—maybe taxes and God, respectively.

In California everybody is going to be a big shot someday, so the poor are stingy too. Elsewhere the pattern of giving follows the pattern of not having much to give. This is especially true in the Appalachians, the Old South, and the northern Rockies and Great Plains. Examples of loving-kindness are also found in the Maine backwoods and in the more remote badlands of Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. Here innately good human beings are living, it should be noted, nowhere near the kind of people who think human beings are innately good.

There is an odd strip of poverty, crime, *and* generosity along the lower Mississippi River. It could be homage to Huck and Jim, or it could be an alluvial deposit from the Midwest, where those things have eroded.





The prevalence of mobile homes does not correspond with the prevalence of poverty, or with much of anything else. All that can be confidently said about America's mobile homes is that they are massed in places where you wouldn't want to be in one. Florida's mobile homes lie athwart the path of hurricanes. Georgia's are in the way of tornadoes. The mobile homes of New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada sit baking in the sun, cooking whoever's inside. An important division in America is one that runs along the lines of common sense.

An even more important division is marriage. Nowhere is America more fully diverse, more thoroughly multicultural, than in a household containing a husband and a wife. The nation appears to have a stiff, straight Spousal Spine from the Canadian border to the boot tip of Texas. Upper midwesterners, too, are more likely to be married than divorced. So are the residents of the eastern foothills of the Appalachians from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. Marriage obtains in Utah and southern Idaho (unless census takers were confused by polygamy miscounts). And, surprisingly, those racy cosmopolitans from New York City to Washington, D.C., are married as well. But maybe for the fourth or fifth time.

The maps dispel any notion that divorce is urban or urbane. It may be so along the Divorce Coasts of Florida and the Pacific. But divorce is also common in the sticks—northern New England, the Deep South, eastern Oklahoma, the Southwest, the southern Midwest, and the whole non-Mormon portion of the western mountains and deserts.

Spouses who leave home usually don't get far—

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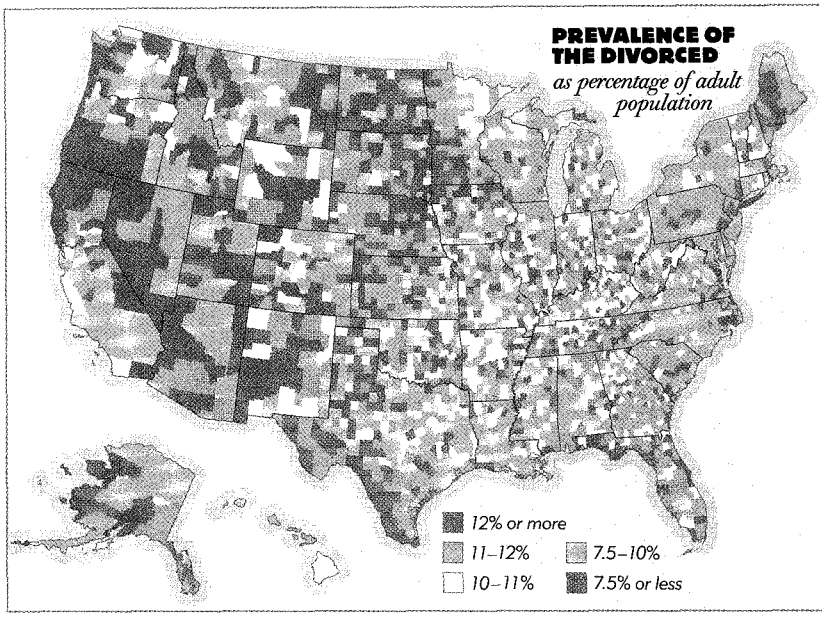
although they do clear out of Mississippi. Otherwise the "Marital Status" and "Prevalence of the Divorced" maps show very similar patterns. But certain specific regions do seem to be magnets for the re-singled. Some locales make a kind of sense as places to start over: Las Vegas, northern California, Taos. Others make no sense. Bad news for seekers of child-support payments: you may have to go looking for your former mates deep in the Everglades; in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; in the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands; or in a forbidding strip of cactus and tumbleweed between Fort Rock, Oregon, and Nevada's Nellis Air Force Bombing and Gunnery Range. It's a sad commentary on what happens to Americans when they don't have someone with whom to differ at home.

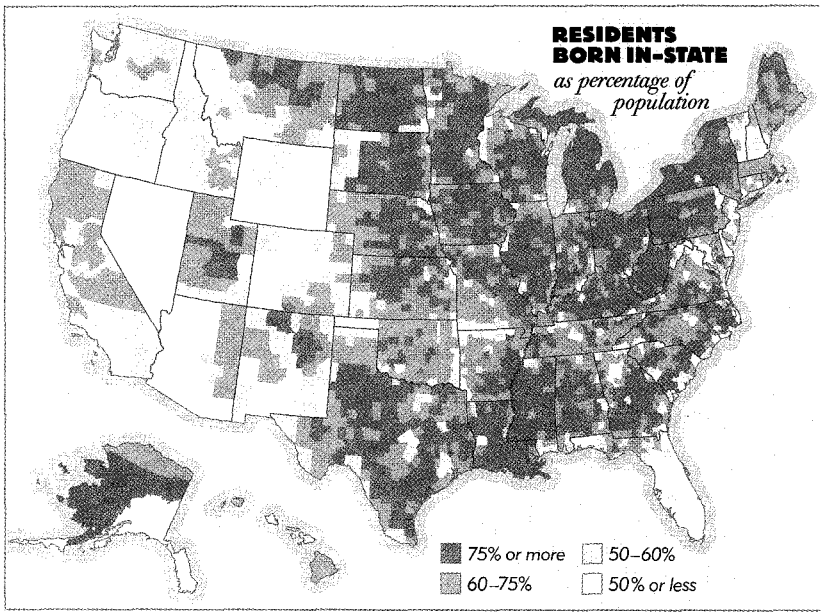
People who have stayed where they were born and people who have moved on should be very different. But the maps don't show that clearly. Instead what we see is that California is no longer the Promised Land. Americans are moving to Nevada, Florida, Wyoming, and New Hampshire. Once Americans sought the good life. Now they seek Keno parlors, tickets to see Wayne Newton, jobs in mouse suits, bad weather, and black flies.

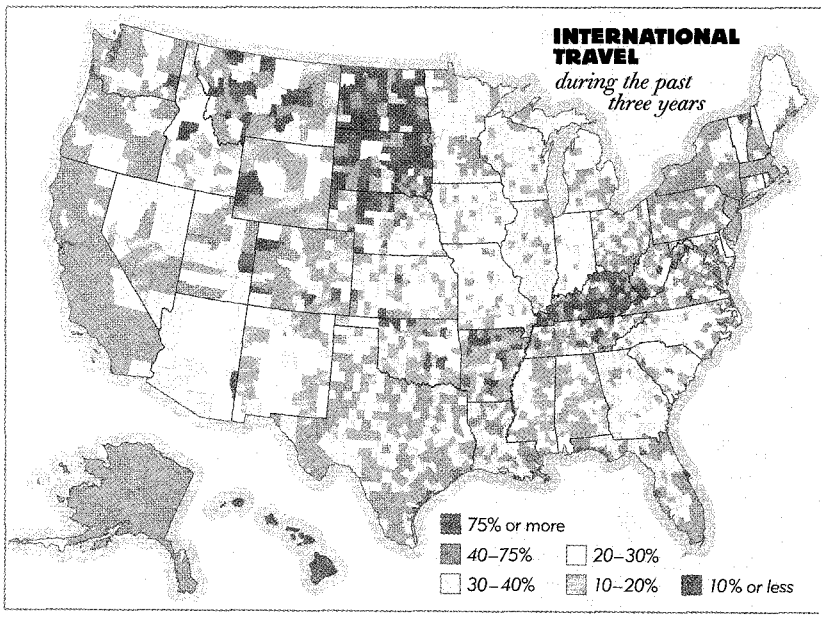
It could be that international travel is a better gauge of American dissimilarities. East and West Coast culturati travel often. So do the sophisticates of the Minneapolis area, when they're not listening to Garrison Keillor lie about Lake Wobegon crime statistics. But it turns out that the continental Americans who do the most foreign travel reside in the mountains of central Montana and in the Snake River region of eastern Washington State. A guess is that these people go to Helena and Spokane and find things there "pretty foreign."

The maps offer various mysteries and conundrums about how America is divided. But when all the maps are considered together, one thing is made plain. There is a core of virtue in America, a nucleus of rectitude, a Righteous Region. Crime is low. Marriages are sound. People stay home. They donate to charities. And their neighbors are as well off as they are. This is in North Dakota, South Dakota, and northern Nebraska. The Righteous Region isn't very diverse. And it certainly isn't divisive. Indeed, the Americans in the rest of the country are all agreed that they wouldn't want to live there.

P.J. O'Rourke is an Atlantic *correspondent. Maps compiled by Nathan Littlefield and Marshall Poe.*







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WHAT AMY WOULD DO

Should you tell your spouse about that fleeting infidelity fifteen years ago? Throw a baby shower for your pregnant-out-of-wedlock daughter? Amy Dickinson, the author of the syndicated advice column "Ask Amy," is the Chicago Tribune's *successor to the great Ann Landers. And she can help—as our correspondent discovered*

BY SRIDHAR PAPPU

Illustrations by Edward Sorel

.....

When I first met her, there were no questions for Amy Dickinson. No "I slept with my ex-boyfriend two days before his wedding—what should I do?" No "Should I leave my wife for my high school sweetheart?" Not even an inquiry about whether it's appropriate to breast-feed during a cocktail party. But that's only because she hadn't made it to her office yet. It was still early in the morning—a few minutes before 8:00 A.M. on a bright, temperate day in late October. Dickinson, an attractive forty-five-year-old woman—she somehow looks like a combination of Mary Tyler Moore and Pat Benatar—was sitting on the top step of Chicago's Field Museum, reading the paper, her paper, the *Chicago Tribune*.

Late the night before, reporters at the rival *Chicago Sun-Times* had come to terms with management just in time to avert an expected strike. A few days later Northwestern would upset Purdue in Evanston at homecoming. Both were good things. But the pleasant feelings they induced would not last. Soon the city's harsh winds and early sunsets would drive everyone indoors, away from dinner parties and scheduled drinks—away from one another, really, and into near hibernation. And this would be the time when Chicago—and other places all across the country—would really need Amy Dickinson. Because inside their too small apartments or too large colonials people would begin to question their motivations for staying with one another, or to suspect that their adoptive fathers never gave a damn, or to yearn for reunion with their estranged children, long-lost lovers, alienated friends. They would wonder if they should tell their spouses about that fleeting infidelity at a motel near the Minneapolis airport fifteen years before.

It may have been too early in the day for Dickinson to be sifting through her readers' questions, but it was not too early to check out her competition. Dickinson became the author of the column "Ask Amy" in July of 2003, when the *Tribune* gave her the newsprint real estate that had long belonged to Eppie Lederer, known to Western civilization as Ann Landers. Today she read her own column first ("just to make sure we're still in business, if you know what I mean"), and then flipped to the back of the *Tribune* to read "Dear Abby," the column of her nearest rival (which is written by Jeanne Phillips, who happens to be the daughter of Eppie Lederer's twin sister, Popo Phillips, its original author).

For two columnists plying the same trade, Dickinson and Phillips could hardly be more different. On this day Dickinson told a middle-aged married woman that it's okay to have crushes on other men—"enjoy but don't indulge"—and admitted to having had a dream ("it wasn't a sex dream") about Dr. Phil. She consoled the mother of an unwed pregnant eighteen-year-old, telling her it was all right to throw the girl a baby shower. Hell, Dickinson wrote, "that horse has left the barn." In response to "Perfect Wedding in Arizona," who was not on speaking terms with most of her family, Dickinson sidestepped an etiquette question about whether Perfect should be forced to invite people she didn't want to and pointed out bluntly that not speaking to whole groups of her kin was a sign that she didn't "'do' family well." Phillips, meanwhile, fielded a question about how many days' notice a family member should give before a visit, and let a reader from Georgia share a random act of kindness she had benefited from.

After concluding that she had bested Phillips that morning, Dickinson and I wandered into the main hall of the Field Museum. The CNN anchors Bill Hemmer and Soledad O'Brien were there taping their show, *American Morning*, which on this morning would feature an interview with the author of "Ask Amy." Dickinson tracked down a producer, who ushered her to makeup. Her eyes firmly shut, and clutching the edges of the makeup chair like an astronaut re-entering the atmosphere, she asked the makeup artist to teach

Sridhar Pappu is an Atlantic *correspondent. His profile of Anne Sweeney, the head of ABC Television, appeared in the November issue.*

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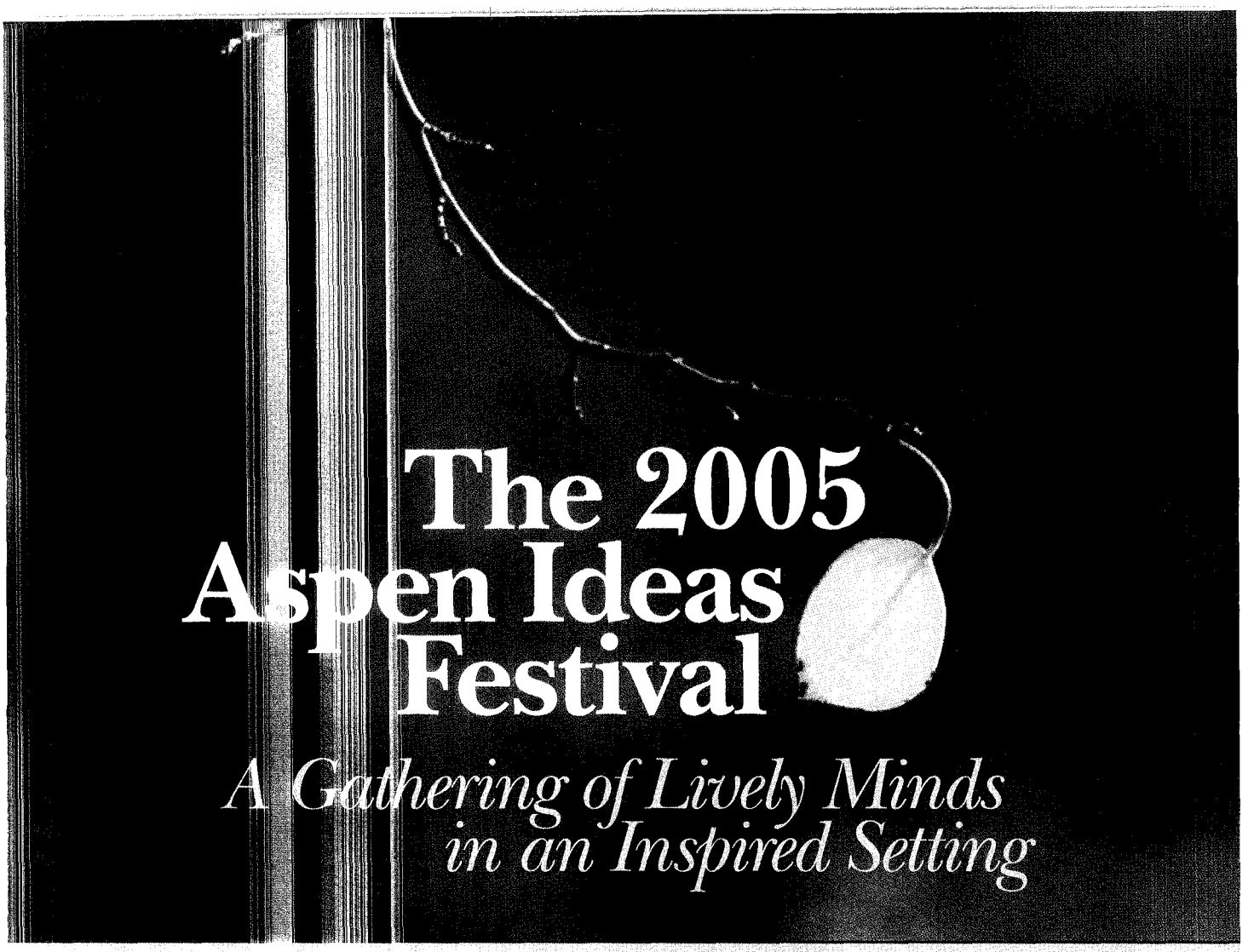

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her how to apply eyeliner—something that, she admitted, was among many things she should have learned when she was fifteen. Of course, when she was fifteen she was busy with field hockey and cheerleading and plays—not to mention with trying to hold her family together; three years earlier her father had walked out into the night, never to return. Someone asked her what she was going to be speaking about on the show. "Well, I write the advice column for the *Trib*," Dickinson said. "So, hopefully, I'll just straighten them out and send them on their way."

Trying to straighten out people's lives while making a name for herself in the shadow of the woman who defined the form—this is the task Dickinson has taken on in her brief tenure as the newest member of the oddest species in American journalism. Unlike Eppie Lederer, however, she does not have the benefit of a stable newspaper-reading audience; instead she has the daunting task of developing a new readership—she currently reaches several million readers—in a little over a hundred papers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Newsday*.

For most of the past half century Eppie Lederer's Ann Landers was recognized as the unquestioned doyenne of the field, but the advice-column format existed long before Lederer became, as her last *Tribune* editor, Rick Kogan, put it in the title of his biography of her, *America's Mom*. Writing as Dorothy Dix, Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer counseled American newspaper readers through the Great Depression, two world wars, and the dawn of the Cold War in a column that ran from 1895 until shortly before her death, in 1951. Writing as Beatrice Fairfax, Marie Manning doled out advice to millions of regular readers—and was immortalized by a line in the 1930 George and Ira Gershwin musical *Girl Crazy*: "Beatrice Fairfax—don't you dare / Ever tell me he will care."

Actually, even Ann Landers existed before Eppie Lederer. The first Ann Landers was a nurse named Ruth Crowley, who wrote the column for the *Chicago Sun-Times* until she died, in 1955. Her death led the paper to recruit twenty-seven writers to participate in a contest for a successor. In 1955 Lederer was new to Chicago, the daughter of Jewish Russian immigrants who had settled in Sioux City, Iowa. She had dropped out of college, married Jules Lederer, a hat salesman from Detroit, and spent her first years of married life in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, becoming active in Democratic Party politics at a time when Joseph McCarthy represented the state in the Senate. With a friend's help, Lederer—who had never published a word—became contestant No. 28 in the competition, which required answering mock questions about law and religion. Displaying the chutzpah that was to make her a legend, she decided to lend credibility to her answers by seeking input from some of the highest authorities around: Justice William O. Douglas, of the Supreme Court, whom she knew from her political work, and the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, who had recently become president of Notre Dame. She got the job.

While her husband built his fortune at Budget Rent-a-Car, which he founded in 1960, Lederer became, through wide syndication, a staple of the American newspaper and led a colorful, eventful life. She feuded with her twin sister (and advice-columnist competitor) for years before they reconciled late in life; she advised presidents and CEOs and socialites. She addressed people who wrote to her as "Honey" or "Bub." She wrote compassionately about homosexuality when most of society deemed it a disease or worse, and helped launch a letter-writing campaign that led Richard Nixon to dedicate $100 million to cancer research by signing the National Cancer Act, in 1971. Working with a team of assistants, she answered even many letters that she never intended to print in her column. And as her marriage dissolved (she divorced Jules in 1975 after learning of his relationship with a redheaded British nurse twenty-eight years his junior), Lederer became a fixture in Chicago's elite. She lived in a fifteen-room apartment on Lake Shore Drive, where she worked every night from eleven to three-thirty or four in the morning, banging out responses to readers on an IBM typewriter. At a time when the city's columnists—Mike Royko, Bob Greene, Irv "Kup" Kupcinet—reveled in both their success and their eccentricities, Lederer fit right in: she was known for rising at noon, and for spending evenings on the town, usually heavily made up, wearing a St. John's suit and high heels, and attended by a male companion. The occasional faux pas (the worst being a discovery in 1982 that she had recycled

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letters from fifteen years earlier) were forgiven. After all, who could stay mad at Eppie?

When her contract at the *Sun-Times* was up in 1987, Lederer was lured over to the *Tribune*, which gave her a six-figure salary and a suite of offices in the Tribune Tower. She rarely spent any time there, though; her limousine driver would fetch the bundles of mail and take them back to her apartment. When she did stop in, former colleagues have said, she was sometimes volatile and intemperate to those around her.

But Lederer was deeply committed to her column, and she continued to work even in her last days. When she learned that she had multiple myeloma (a cancer of the bone marrow), in January of 2002, she refused chemotherapy, and wrote the column from her bed until the pain became too great. Very few knew about her illness, and she died quietly on the afternoon of June 22, 2002, with only a caregiver at her side. Her only child, Margo Howard, did not hold a large ceremony, choosing instead a quiet gathering of sixteen people, who watched as Lederer's ashes were scattered in Lake Michigan. Many of her society friends were not among them; neither was her niece, Jeanne Phillips. Most of her possessions—including letters to her from Winston Churchill and Eleanor Roosevelt—were sold at auction.

A member of the oddest species in journalism, Dickinson strives to straighten out people's lives—in the shadow of Ann Landers, who defined the form. How do you recalibrate the advice column for the modern era?

"There will never be another Ann Landers," Lederer told *The New Yorker* in the last years of her life. "When I go, the column goes with me."

Though her former syndicate offered newspapers a package of old Ann Landers columns plus a new column put out by her two assistants, called "Annie's Mailbox," and a syndicated version of Margo Howard's online column for *Slate*, called "Dear Prudence," insiders at the *Tribune* felt that the Ann Landers era was finished. The paper was still reeling from the deaths of its other signature columnists Mike Royko (in 1997) and Gene Siskel (in 1999), and some executives argued that the *Tribune* should no longer be in the advice-column business. But Jim Warren, the *Tribune*'s deputy managing editor, and Ann Marie Lipinski, its editor, thought the end of the Ann Landers era presented an opportunity for the *Tribune* to create a star of its own and to do something even more ambitious: recalibrate the general advice column for the modern era. The advice column is read with prurient interest in many quarters today, but the fact is that it remains an especially powerful form of communication and consolation for countless readers around the country—that is, assuming the right person is behind it.

So how *did* Amy Dickinson become the right person? It's an unlikely story. After all, here was a woman whose first job out of college was as a lounge singer, and who one day was a housewife in London and the next was divorced and living with a two-year-old daughter in Washington, D.C. She and her daughter had moved to Washington in 1991, after her husband, Anthony Mason, a correspondent for CBS, abruptly retreated from their lives.

Dickinson knew few people in Washington, and had little in the way of career prospects. Her job, she said, was to raise her little girl, Emily Mason, to womanhood. Anything else she did was extra. "I took a writing class at Georgetown at night before I had any friends," Dickinson told me, "because I wanted to show Emily I did stuff outside the home. The class was stupid—it was mostly for elderly people. So I stopped going."

But once Emily began nursery school, Dickinson started to form a life for herself. She worked occasionally as a substitute teacher. She taught Sunday school. She freelanced for *The Washington Post*, *Esquire*, and *Allure*. (Before her marriage she was a producer at NBC.) She started doing commentaries for *All Things Considered*. She wrote a column for *Time* on family living, which ran from 1999 to 2001. In one memorable piece, in May of 2001, she lashed out at pundits who—pointing to newly released census data showing a rise in the number of single mothers raising children—claimed that the trend was yet another sign that the falcon could no longer hear the falconer, that things in America had finally fallen apart. Describing herself and her daughter, Dickinson wrote, "This family feels whole. It feels as if it works."

After Lederer's death Ann Marie Lipinski and Jim Warren received hundreds of unsolicited applications from all over the world—from suburban housewives, shrinks, already published columnists—saying that they were what the *Tribune* really needed, the next Eppie. One woman wrote demanding a contract, quoting her starting salary, and giving the address where her computer and fax machine should be sent. When her request wasn't met, she sent a virulent note demanding to know what the holdup was.

Warren, who had been a neighbor and confidant of Dickinson's in Washington when he was serving as the *Tribune*'s Washington bureau chief (twice, by different people, they were set up on a blind date), scoured the country in search of a replacement for Lederer. When Dickinson said she would be interested in the job, Warren was intrigued. He had helped Dickinson land her job at *Time*, and he knew her to be smart and funny, a person with broad life experience, someone who knew the perils of being a working

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single mother. He also knew she was hungry; her column had been phased out at *Time*.

Warren sent her the sample questions he was sending to the other leading candidates. He had told candidates they had a week to get back to him; Dickinson's responses came that same day. Dickinson advised a man who had fallen in love with a second cousin, who was reluctant to admit their love to her family, that although a Cornell geneticist told her there would be no adverse repercussions if second or even first cousins conceived children, the fact that the woman wanted to keep the relationship a secret might very well mean she wasn't that attached to him. She gave a stern thrashing to some people who were fighting over the possessions of a terminally ill but not yet dead relative. And to a person who had spent a lot of money to attend the destination wedding of a rich couple and didn't want to have to buy a gift, Dickinson suggested an inexpensive but thoughtful offering, such as a scrapbook of pictures from the wedding.

Warren took the answers from six final candidates on vacation to upper Michigan. He convened several members of his wife's family as a focus group, and had them judge the sample columns blind. The judgment was unanimous: they all liked "No. 2"—Dickinson—the best. The *Tribune* subsequently held other, more formal focus groups in the Chicago suburbs, but by the time Dickinson arrived in the city for her job interview, on October 17, 2002, she was already a clear front-runner. After several months of deliberation at the *Tribune*, she was offered the job, and her column debuted on July 20, 2003. The intent was clear: by putting her in Ann Landers's old space, the *Tribune* was using the Landers franchise to launch Dickinson to readers.

Her arrival was not without controversy. After an interview on CNN in which Dickinson promised readers a "funnier" and "more entertaining" read, Margo Howard (whose syndicated column the *Tribune* canceled when "Ask Amy" debuted) told *Newsday*, "Nobody compares her favorably to my mother except herself."

"I think what stuck in her craw was the use of the Ann Landers name," Dickinson told me. "The *Tribune* used the phrase 'the new Ann Landers' to market this column. And she didn't like that at all, and I don't blame her. Strictly speaking, they were correct. The paper was replacing the Ann Landers column. That doesn't mean that I am any replacement for Ann Landers. But they were making this association for the readers. And you know what? It worked. It got a lot of attention. But Margo, they also canceled her column, and she hates that, and one day I expect that to happen to me, and I'll hate that."

Dickinson never knows what she'll find when she walks into her small office on the fifth floor of the *Tribune* building each morning. (Unlike Lederer, she is without assistants or a wing to herself.) Hanging on a bulletin board are columns sent back to her by readers. One has "HORSESHIT" stamped in red across it. Another has "B.S.!" scrawled in black pen across her words. Alongside these columns is a postcard that says,

> Hey Amy—how come you can be an "advice columnist" and dispense all kinds of wise stuff to people about their love life ... and we understand YOU are listed as a single parent!!! ... How come YOU don't have a husband? How come YOU can't hold on to a man? Why don't you *take* some of your own "advice" and keep a stable home life for your kids? How come YOU don't address this in your column?

"I think putting up the 'Horseshit' and 'B.S.' stuff has been good for me," Dickinson says, "because it's a reminder there's a guy out there with a 'Horseshit' stamp, and he's prepared to use it. And I don't want to be afraid of the 'Horseshit' stamp, because then I'm a lost man. All I've got is my own point of view. It's just a reminder that it's going to be okay; it's something I have to go through."

It's fair to say that Dickinson has a job quite unlike any other. The task of most beat reporters is to work sources, sometimes by promising them anonymity, to get them to reveal information they normally wouldn't share. Over time that stress can wear you down, or drive you to drink. Dickinson's stress is different: her stories come to her in an overwhelming flood. She opens all her own mail, reads all her own letters.

The flood of input is not limited to the mail. One day, as we sat talking in her office, Dickinson answered the phone to discover an angry reader named Florence on the other

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end of the line. Florence was upset that Dickinson had used the words "safe sex" in a recent column.

"So you don't think there's any such thing as safe sex—is that what you're saying?" Dickinson said. "Okay. Okay. I can't change it, because it's already been written, but I really appreciate your point of view. Do I believe in it? Well, when I say 'safe sex,' it's just kind of terminology. The only safe sex is no sex—is that what you mean? I understand. Okay, thanks for calling."

Dickinson's column schedule works on a model that is the reverse of the *New York Times* crossword puzzle's: she begins with hard issues on Monday and gets lighter as the week goes on. Sundays are reserved for spiritual matters. Unlike Lederer, Dickinson rarely answers letters that won't be published, which explains why she gets e-mails like this one:

> I sent you a letter and have not heard a response from you as of yet. It was regarding a relationship I have been having with a married man for seven years now. I wanted your advice on that. AND I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR ANSWER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

She does not change the wording of a question, and she does not try to respond with pointed, one-paragraph responses, as Lederer did. Indeed, her answer is sometimes twice as long as the letter.

LOVE CONNECTION BUT WITH A CATCH

Dear Amy: I am getting tired of hearing about the women who can't find nice men. You tell them that looking in a bar is the wrong place.

I have an alternative place to go to find a guy: the local comic-book shop. I don't mean the single spinner rack at the local chain bookstore but a real comics shop. I know it sounds strange, but comics are not just for kids. They're great storytelling devices.

Men who go to comic-book shops have good values, are of all sizes and ethnicities, and the time they spend in the shop and reading is time they are not cheating on someone or getting sloppy drunk.

Go on a Wednesday, because that's when the new issues get delivered.

—Comic Genius

Dear Genius: First, let me clear this up—I don't tell people not to go to bars to meet one another. I tell people that there is a good chance that the people you meet in bars will be the sort of people who like to go to bars. Does that make sense?

I love your suggestion, so I field tested it at a comic-book store in downtown Chicago—on a Wednesday.

You're right! There were lots of guys there!

However, here's the thing about comic-book stores—the guys who go there really like comic books. I spoke with a female employee who said that the ratio of men to women is very favorable (to women), at about 20-1, and that they all have something in common: They really like comic books.

What I like about your idea is that it is a great reminder that it is good for all of us to leave our comfort zone. Trying new things makes people more interesting. Interesting people are more attractive.

The problem with your idea is that comic-book stores are full of people who really like comic books. Which brings us back to my bar theory: When you choose to meet people at a place that has a very specific focus, it helps if you share that focus.

Comic-book collecting is a hobby, which—as absorbing as it is—isn't everyone's cup of tea, though I did pick up a couple of "storytelling devices" myself.

Dear Amy: I am a recovering alcoholic. My side of the family are all alcoholics. On my husband's side, they are not.

Some time ago I had a relapse, and nothing has been the same since. My husband says I should have nothing to do with my mother (the source of the problem), and there is nothing I can do to assure him there is nothing going on with me as far as alcohol.

My mother is 80-plus years old, and I am worried about her health. I have a sister who lives close by, but she can do only so much.

My husband gave me an ultimatum today, saying not to go to my mom's again. He totally does not trust me. What do I do, and where do I turn?

—Upset but Sober

Dear Upset: Ultimatums often come at the end of a long road of broken trust. Spouses don't generally jump to ultimatums without first suffering some betrayal. I'm going to assume that your drinking has taken its toll on your husband.

You may be able to negotiate a settlement of sorts with the help of a third party. If you are members of a faith community, your clergy could sit down with the two of you and hear you out. If you can find a therapist with some experience in dealing with addiction and recovery, counseling could help both of you breach this impasse.

I also must suggest AA and Al-Anon; you both need the continuing support of a community of people who understand your lives and experiences—from the inside.

A day spent reading Dickinson's letters is both a reminder of the universality of human experience and a barometer of cultural trends. There are timeless letters from the brokenhearted, who cannot sleep, who cannot trust; from a woman with a sexless marriage whose husband seems always to be hanging out with a certain female co-worker; from the twenty-nine-year-old girlfriend of a divorced man who cannot stand the affection his ex-wife shows him. But there are also angry letters from grandmothers upset at the belly-shirts their granddaughters wear. There are e-mails from affluent and middle-income people tired of being hit up for every benefit or walk for diabetes or breast cancer. And there are truculent responses from animal owners, to whom Dickinson has tried to explain that their pets are not human beings.

And, of course, there are the crush letters. Following an appearance on *CBS Sunday Morning*, she received two e-mails. One was from a man in Florida, who told her she

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looked great and that they should meet for coffee and do some "mutual pleasuring." Another came from a lesbian who wanted to get together and have lunch at the Four Seasons. It was signed, "Very Gaily Yours."

"I think that I have this 'hapless' thing going for me," she told me. "In my present column I'm very open about being this hapless, middle-aged, single woman. When people write about dating, I kind of laugh along with them, because I've had my share of blind dates. So I think I come off as this quirky single woman. I don't, quite frankly, think of myself as a single mom, but it's an important part of my public persona." Throwing her head back, Dickinson joked, "So now it's like I can't ever be hooked up with a man, because it works for me professionally, being single."

One afternoon, as Dickinson and I watched *Dr. Phil* and ploughed through a box full of clipped, mutilated "Ask Amy" and "Dear Abby" columns, sent by a clearly troubled reader, there was a knock on the door. A *Tribune* writer—who wishes to remain nameless—had come up with the solution for a problem of her own, but wanted to run it by Dickinson, whom she referred to as "Ask." The previous year, through Match.com, she had met a man who

"In my column I'm very open about being this hapless, middle-aged, single woman. When people write about dating, I kind of laugh along with them. I've had my share of blind dates."

spent ten years on Wall Street and then returned home to Nebraska, where he owned a 30,000-acre ranch. He had flown to Chicago for a date. That had gone well, so she had traveled to Nebraska for three or four days. That hadn't gone as well.

"It was too much time," the nameless writer said. "Too much of him. You just can't go from not knowing somebody at all to being around each other constantly."

But in recent months, she said, she hadn't been able to stop thinking about this guy, and in recent weeks the two had gotten back in touch. She wanted to invite him to an event at the opera, but she didn't want him to stay at her place. It wasn't that she didn't want to sleep with him—she didn't know yet whether or not she did. But she had a small apartment, and the weekend could be choked with tension. Would he be insulted, she asked "Ask," if she offered to put him up at the W Hotel?

"Wouldn't a guy be insulted if a girl did that?" the woman asked, turning to me.

"I'd be a little disappointed," I said.

At this point Dickinson, having turned down the volume on *Dr. Phil*, began to establish how things should be. Yes, the writer should invite the man to town, but she should say, "Please let me put you up at the W. It's the coolest hotel in town. It's got the greatest, best bar, my place is super-tiny, and I'm really excited to see you." Dickinson said, "I just think that's really proper but it's also polite. It's a really lovely gesture to make."

"I am so excited for you," she continued. "And your hair looks great. I'm really, really excited for you. Somebody might be getting some. God willing."

"God willing," the writer said.

Perhaps Dickinson's greatest natural asset is the ability to draw people's problems out of them, even in real life—not feeding on these people as if she were drawing strength from their misery but, rather, responding to them with empathy and warmth and understanding.

Naturally, over the days I spent with Dickinson I found myself starting to tell her things—especially about the previous twelve months, a year I've officially categorized as the worst of my life. I told her how I'd left a good job and the graces of an editor I hold in my heart second only to my father in order to work for more money at a multinational corporation from which, each day, I would come home feeling battered and intellectually unchallenged and devoid of hope. Over dinner (and two glasses of bourbon) one night I told her about how I'd fallen in love, real love, for the first time in my adult life, with the woman I thought would be the mother of my children—only to have my heart shattered. I told her about a friendship that had effectively ended alongside the breakup, and about ... well, you know. Dickinson listened and related her own work and love experiences, making me feel better. Which I suppose is what a good advice columnist does: she shows you that you are not alone in the world, shows you that someone understands, lets you know that everyone goes batshit sometimes, and that recovering from it can lead you to expectations and views that translate to a new life, a better life.

In Dickinson's home town for Halloween weekend, I began to understand where this ability comes from. Freeville, New York, where her ancestors settled in the years after the Revolutionary War, is the kind of place Garrison Keillor deadpans about, but whose complexities Thornton Wilder truly understood. Here she was raised, the youngest of four, on the dairy farm at the edge of the village that her father, Charles "Buck" Dickinson, tried to manage until it simply overwhelmed him. He left it and his family when Amy was twelve. Making the best of it, Dickinson's mother, Jane, sold the livestock and equipment at auction and at forty-eight became a typist at Cornell. Two deans encouraged her to enroll in the school full time and earn an undergraduate degree. An MFA followed, as did a real career—a fifteen-year stint teaching at Ithaca College.

"It informs me," Dickinson says of her hard early-life

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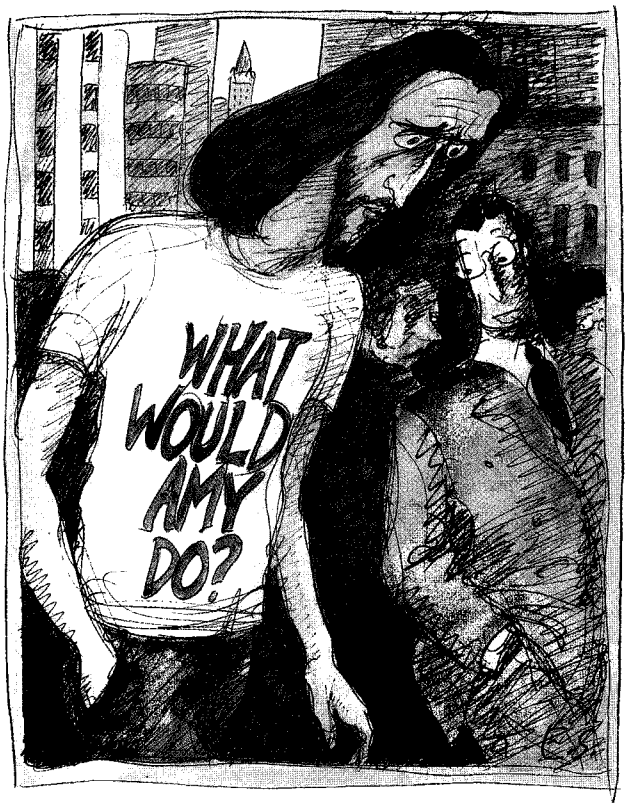
experience. "I feel like I know what loss is, and also when I hear from people with family rifts, these issues and problems that go back for decades, I get it. So I just don't say 'Get a life.' When people say 'Just get it together,' if any of us could, we would. Wouldn't that be my first choice? But I feel like I know what it means to get a life—it's a combination of bootstraps and real emotional resilience and temperament."

Given what has happened to her in life, one can understand how Dickinson, a popular, stay-out-of-trouble, participate-in-everything girl in high school, might have turned into Miss Lonelyhearts, the forlorn, dispirited, and ultimately hateful advice-columnist character in the bleak novella by Nathanael West. After meeting Anthony Mason her junior year at Georgetown, Dickinson spent most of her twenties in his shadow as he grew prominent in TV news. Dickinson followed him, first to New York and then to London, settling into life as a housewife and a mother. Though based in London, Mason was rarely around his wife and infant daughter. By his own estimate, he told me recently, he spent 260 days away from home one year.



In 1990 Mason ended the marriage. The divorce is something that Dickinson is "still dealing with," according to her closest friend, Kirk Read, a professor at Bates College, in Maine. "I think she's still coming to grips with what that all meant," he says. If anything, Dickinson told me, her being divorced helps the column. "I can still sit on the bus and sob over my divorce," she said. "You know, it's easier for me to write about divorce than it is to write about marriage. When I write about marriage, it's an abstract concept to me. It truly is at this point. I'm much more comfortable and much more intimate with divorce. Some of the marriage questions really take much more work and thought for me, because I have to imagine what these long, long marriages are like."

"Somebody who knows me pretty well said, 'Wow, you really take this seriously,' and I was shocked," Dickinson said of one person's response to how she approaches her work. "I think I have this reputation for having this caustic sense of humor. If I didn't think that people could change and feel better, then I wouldn't do it. Every single morning I get up and go running along Lake Michigan and tell myself I'm going to be better. I have to think that. We have this desire to improve ourselves. And I feel like I'm a part of that."

One afternoon, a few days before Halloween, Dickinson and I visited an after-school program, set amid the ill-begotten high-rises of the Cabrini-Green public-housing project. It looked like any other after-school program for the disadvantaged: there were games and a few computers, a few eager volunteers. After telling the kids what she does for a living, Dickinson began to field questions from them. She took a few easy ones, and then one girl raised her hand and said, "Some of the kids in my class don't like me, so they threaten me—they threaten to hit me and stuff. What do I do?"

"Part of it is being strong," Dickinson replied. "Part of it is not being scared or acting scared. I know it's just hard to do, but if you can just keep your back straight and show somebody that it doesn't bother you, they will leave you alone. It doesn't mean you need to threaten them or give them a hard time. It just means you need to straighten up and walk away."

One person who requires Dickinson to keep her back straight is Margo Howard, who lives with her fourth husband, a heart surgeon named Ron Weintraub, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Having recently broken her ribs falling down the stairs, Howard told me on the dark November day when I came calling, "If you're ever going to be in the emergency room, make sure your husband is the chief of surgery."

Howard is a polished woman. After making some coffee she said, "Come, my boy," and ushered me into a living room where, among other ornate objects, sits a bench once owned by Somerset Maugham.

Howard was straightforward about the controversy surrounding the aftermath of her mother's death: Lederer didn't want a large funeral, and there was no reason to include Jeanne Phillips—whom, Howard said, her mother rarely saw—at whatever service was held. As for the sale of Lederer's possessions, Howard said that her mother hadn't been concerned about the fate of her material things, and had told her in writing to do whatever she wanted with them after her death. Some had gone to the Chicago His-

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torical Society, and Howard planned to donate other items to the Radcliffe library.

"I was sixty-two when she died," Howard said. "I've had four husbands. I have a nice bank account. I *have* furniture. What did they want me to do with things from a fifteen-room apartment? What is wrong with them? I just took what I loved. I don't know what's up with these people who say, 'How could she?' It made no sense. It was a way to come at me. I became the target. Do not ask me why. There I was with a sign on my forehead: 'Let's say something nasty about Margo.'"

Howard, who answers four letters a week in her online *Slate* column, is frank about her feelings toward Dickinson, whom she describes as "no great shakes." "She's not the new Ann Landers," Howard told me. "She's the new advice columnist. That's what the *Tribune* should have done, said 'Here's our new advice columnist.' All she can do is look tarnished by reflection. I resent this attempt to slide in on my mother's reputation and her name."

Howard and I spoke about how many people her mother had touched during her tenure, and about how much she loved her. She told me that with her mother's passing, the great power of the general-interest column had officially come to an end. As I got up to leave, she asked me, "Honey, do you have a real life?"

"A real life?" I asked.

"A partner," she said. "Somebody you like."

"I had a girlfriend," I said. "I don't have her anymore."

"A gone girlfriend," Howard said, and then asked, "Are your folks in this country? Do they care if you settle down with an Indian girl?"

"They used to," I said. "They don't care anymore."

"Like the old Jews," Howard said. "They gave it up. This is funny—imagine what my mother did for a living, and having a kid with three divorces. She was terrific about that. Actually, she said it would be good if I only dated Jewish boys. Marriage is tough enough without introducing religious differences. I got two dispensations: one was for an Indian kid who was at MIT and whose father was on the supreme court of India. The other one was an exchange student at Harvard. He was the Aga Khan. I didn't want to cross Mother, but neither did I want to pass that up. So I sidestepped it with the old lady, and told her, 'Listen, there's an exchange student at Harvard named Khan—what do you think?' That's often a Jewish name, so she said okay. And I don't know if she was right or not: the current, wonderful, last husband happens to be Jewish—but my other good marriage was to a Christian."

"Do you find yourself drawn to Caucasian girls?" she asked.

"I guess," I said. "I date them."

"You go for it," she said. "I'll protect you, because I'm an advice lady."

But I already had an advice lady. And on a cold, rainy day the following week I found myself in my office in midtown Manhattan, unable to work. I'd grown used to Dickinson, and had come to rely on both her counsel and her comforting physical presence. Hell, I'll say it: I missed her, and I told her so in an e-mail.

> Dear Amy: I'm a reporter working on a piece about an advice columnist and I've become addicted to the advice/support she's giving me. Is this a common occurrence? What should I do?
>
> Best,
> Advice Junkie

A few minutes later a response came.

> Dear Junkie: Ideally, an advice columnist is just an efficient delivery system for common sense. I can see how a person would become reliant on that. But the whole idea here is for you to develop your own boundaries, your own radar, and your own voice. Remember—the Great and Powerful Oz was really just a guy behind a curtain.
>
> The next time you find yourself jonesing for another advice fix, I want you to look in the mirror and ask yourself, "What would Amy tell me to do?"
>
> Then I want you to go ahead and do it.

RETROSPECTIVE

What carried us from year to year was yield:
potatoes in, potatoes out, like rowing.
Fist-sized, firm, rich-tasting and abundant—
of such abundance we could eat them all
winter long and have some left for seed.
It seemed holy even then, to harvest
red and russet, shake the moist earth
from the tuber, feel its heft and lob
it on the pile soon to be transported
to the fruit room (dirt floor and damp cement,
tomatoes on the vine, apples, potatoes).
An earthy flourish of the immanent.

Spring, and quartering the rest to plant,
one eye, at least, per chunk. Father crouched
over the hoe. When did I learn to see
paternal love in seed potatoes planted
with a grunt? Or catechism in the rhythm
beat out as he sowed, tamping down the dirt?

—GERI DORAN

Geri Doran's first collection of poems, Resin, *received the 2004 Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. Doran lives in northern California.*

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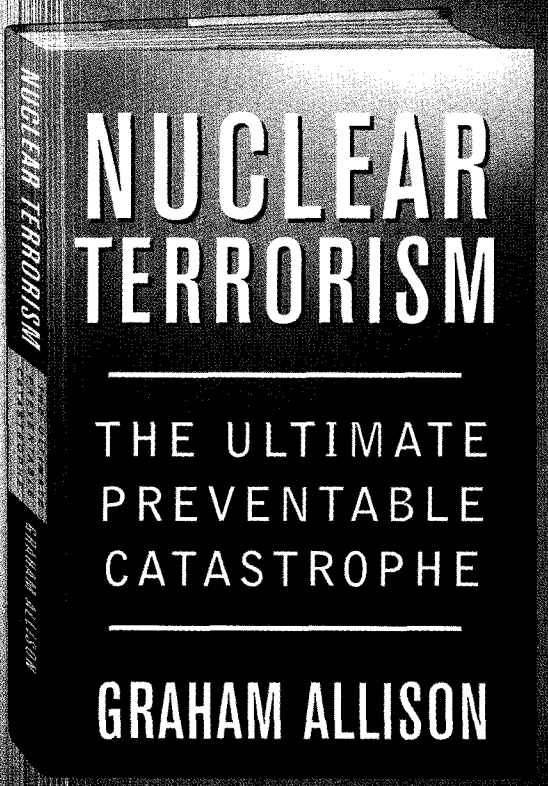
S[illegible] MOST SERIOUS THREAT
[illegible] UNITED STATES?"

NUCLEAR TERRORISM

President [illegible] with my opponent that the biggest threat [illegible] the hands of a terrorist network."

WHAT IS THE SINGLE BEST BOOK ON THIS THREAT?



The New York Times Book Review: "Allison's comprehensive but accessible treatment of this vital subject is a **major contribution to public understanding**."

Warren Buffett: "**Nuclear terrorism** is by far the **most important problem of our time**. And this is the **most important book** that has been written on the subject."

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LOST IN THE MERITOCRACY

How I traded an education for a ticket to the ruling class

BY WALTER KIRN

Illustrations by Jason Schneider

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On the bus ride down to St. Paul to take the test that will help determine who will get ahead in life, who will stay put, and who will fall behind, two of my closest buddies seal their fates by opening pint bottles of cherry schnapps the moment we leave the high school parking lot. They hide the liquor under their varsity jackets and monitor the driver's rearview mirror for opportune moments to duck their heads and swig. A girl sees what they're up to, mutters, "Morons," and goes back to shading in the tiny ovals in her Scholastic Aptitude Test review book. She dated one of the guys a few months back, but lately she's grown serious, ambitious; I've heard that she hopes to practice law someday and prosecute companies that pollute the air. When she notices one of the bottles coming my way, she shoots me a look of horror.

"No, thanks," I say.

My friends seem wounded by this—aren't we teammates? We play baseball and football together. We go way back. In our high school class there are only fifteen boys, and every summer some of us camp out by the river and cannonball from the cliffs into the current. We talk as though we'll be together forever, though I've always known better: Someday we'll be ranked. Someday we'll be screened and then separated. I've known this since my first day of kindergarten, when I raised my hand slightly faster than the other kids—and waved it around to make sure the teacher saw it.

My buddies give me another chance to drink.

"Put that away, guys. Today is a big deal for us."

But they know this already—they just don't like the fact.

"Come on," one says. "A sip."

"I'm sorry. No."

And so I go on to college, and they don't.

Percentile is destiny in America. Four years after that bus ride I'm slumped on an old sofa in the library of my Princeton eating club, waiting to feel the effects of a black capsule that someone said would help me finish writing my overdue application for a Rhodes scholarship. At the other end of the sofa sits my good friend Adam (all names in this piece have been changed)—a Jewish science whiz from the New York suburbs who ate magic mushrooms one evening, had a vision, and switched from pre-med to English literature. Adam should be reading *Dubliners*, which he'll be tested on early tomorrow morning, but he's preoccupied with an experiment. He's smashing Percocet tablets with a hammer and trying to smoke the powder through a water pipe.

I have other companions in estrangement, way out here on the bell curve's leading edge, where our talent for multiple-choice tests has landed us without even the sketchiest survival instructions. Our club isn't one of the rich, exclusive outfits, where the pedigreed children of the establishment eat chocolate-dipped strawberries off silver trays carried by black waiters in starched white uniforms, but one that anyone can join, where geeks and misfits line up with plastic plates for veggie burgers and canned fruit salad. At the moment the club is struggling financially and has fewer than twenty paid-up members, including two religious fanatics who came to Princeton as normal young men, I'm told, but failed somehow to mix and grew withdrawn. Not long from now, one will take a Bible passage too literally and pluck out one of his eyes in penance for

Walter Kirn is a novelist and critic who lives in Montana. His essay "American Everyman," about Warren Buffett, appeared in the November Atlantic.

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some failing he won't disclose; the other will style himself a campus messiah and persuade a number of "disciples"—most of them black and here on scholarships—to renounce their degrees just before graduation as a protest against Princeton's fallenness.

The rest of us in the club feel almost as lost. One kid, a token North Dakotan (Princeton likes to boast that it has students from all fifty states), wears the same greaser haircut he brought from Fargo and has poured all his energy for the past few years into fronting a lackadaisical rock band that specializes in heartland heavy metal. His soul never made the leap from Main Street to the Ivy League. Another young man is nearly catatonic from dropping LSD and playing pinball in marathon sessions that sometimes last twelve hours. Strike a match an inch from his face and he won't flinch—his pupils won't even contract from the flame.

If my buddies from Minnesota could see me now, they wouldn't have a clue whom they were seeing, and I—also bewildered—wouldn't be able to help them. Four years ago my SAT scores set me on a trajectory. One day I looked down at a booklet filled with questions concerning synonyms and antonyms and the meeting times of trains on opposite tracks, and the next thing I knew I was opening thick envelopes from half the colleges in the country. One, from Macalester College, in St. Paul, contained an especially tempting offer: immediate admission as a freshman. I didn't even have to finish senior year in high school.

I enrolled the next fall, but with no intention of staying. I'd read my Fitzgerald, and I wanted to go east; I wanted to ride the train to the last station. As a natural-born child of the meritocracy, I'd been amassing momentum my whole life, entering spelling bees, vying for forensics medals, running my mouth in mock United Nations meetings and model state governments and student congresses, and I knew only one direction: forward, onward. I lived for prizes, praise, distinctions, and I gave no thought to any goal higher or broader than my next report card. Learning was secondary; promotion was primary. No one had ever told me what the point was, except to keep on accumulating points, and this struck me as sufficient. What else was there?

Before I'd been at Macalester a month, I applied to transfer to Princeton as a sophomore. I was warned that only twenty students a year got into the university this way, but I was used to being the exception; it was the only condition I'd ever known. Like a novice gambler on a winning streak, I wasn't even sure that failure existed, except for others. To bolster my application, I looked around Macalester for a contest, any contest, that I might place first in, and I hit at last on a poetry competition that seemed to be attracting few entries. I'd never written serious poetry, but this didn't faze me. My desire to get ahead was all the inspiration I'd ever needed. Appetite can be a kind of genius.

I won the poetry contest. A few months later I found myself sitting in a Princeton lecture hall that was older than my home town, writing down a new word: "post-structuralism." I couldn't define it exactly, but I knew more or less what it meant: I was making progress of sorts. The student next to me bore a famous last name that I recognized from a high school history text (not Rockefeller, but close). Discovering that it was still in circulation among living people—individuals whom I was expected to befriend now and make a career among, if possible—renewed in me a sense of dislocation that I'd been fighting, and courting, since entering grade school.

Tonight, on speed and applying for the Rhodes in a room full of red-eyed former valedictorians, I'm more disoriented than ever. Only a few months short of graduation I've run out of thoughts, out of the stuff that thoughts are made from. I'm mute, aphasic. I can't write a word. A doctor I saw when I went home last summer pronounced me severely malnourished and put me on a regimen of vitamins, but this is depletion of another kind. I've been fleeing upward since age five, learning just enough at every level to make it, barely, to the next one. I'm the system's pure product, clever and adaptable, not so much educated as wised-up; but now I've hit a wall.

The common room had evolved into a concentrated version of what the whole campus had come to represent for me: a private association of the powerful that I'd been permitted to visit on a day pass.

I put my pen down as my friend holds out the water pipe stoked with pulverized pain pills. "You should try this," he says.

I flash back to that bus, to that bottle of cherry schnapps. Back then I knew where I was going, and that to get there I'd have to keep a clear head. But now I'm here, and my head doesn't function the way it used to. All thanks to a test that measured ... what, exactly? Nothing important, I've discovered. Nothing sustaining. Just "aptitude."

That's why we're here: we all showed aptitude. Aptitude for showing aptitude, mainly. That's what they wanted, so that's what we delivered. A talent for nothing, but a knack for everything.

Nobody told us it wouldn't be enough.

My first semester at Princeton, I had four roommates, who resembled no one I'd ever known: A foppish piano prodigy with a moustache, who dreamed of writing Broadway musical comedies and spent his free hours in robe and slippers, smoking Benson &

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Hedges Menthol 100s and hunching, vulturelike, over his piano, plinking out show tunes about doe-eyed ingénues who'd been seduced and ruined by caddish millionaires. The budding composer's pudgy heiress girlfriend, whose father owned a five-star Manhattan hotel and regularly sent a limousine on weekends so that his daughter could drink cocktails with celebrities, who—as I gathered from a snapshot she showed me—included the Bee Gees. The son of a New York City TV newscaster, who kept his cheeks fresh with Oil of Olay and treated the composer and the heiress as his surrogate parents, addressing them in baby talk and asking them to tuck him in at night, which they did, complete with fairy tales. And an earnest Long Island Quaker kid with a short red beard, who played guitar and protested apartheid, which I pretended to be concerned

about too, although I wasn't certain what it was. The SATs hadn't required such trivial knowledge.

One night a report came over the radio that John Lennon, my Quaker friend's hero, had been assassinated, which plunged the Quaker into fits of violent weeping in which I felt compelled to join. Lennon's death meant very little to me (my tastes ran to midwestern stadium rock), but I needed a good cry that night for other reasons.

It had all started one Sunday when the heiress, Jennifer, returned from one of her weekend jaunts lugging a case of champagne her father had given her. She saw me watching her from my bedroom doorway and invited me into the common living room, where we popped the cork on a bottle and drank the bubbly without glasses, licking the foam when it ran down the neck. This struck me as the height of decadence, and reason enough for betraying my high school buddies, whom I'd promised to keep in touch with but hadn't.

When the bottle of champagne was gone, Jennifer said, "You owe me twenty." I looked at her uncomprehendingly. "It's a good bottle," she said. "You owe me twenty."

I didn't have the money, and I said so. My parents sent checks now and then, but not for much; they lacked any sense of the cost of living at Princeton. My phone bills alone consumed most of their remittances, freezing me out of any real social life and limiting my wardrobe to a pair of Levi's; a blue T-shirt; two white dress shirts, which I seldom found occasion to wear; and one red, lumberjacky flannel number, which filled me with shame about my regional origins.

"Welsher," Jennifer said, putting me in my place. In Minnesota, I hadn't had a place, but here I did: several levels down from heiresses who charged their roommates to drink free champagne. It seemed unfair that I had come so far in life only to find new ways to fall short.

The humiliations mounted. One afternoon a van from Bloomingdale's pulled up in front of our dormitory, and a crew of men began unloading furniture that appeared to belong on the set of a TV show about single young socialites. The men placed armchairs, lamps, tables, and a sofa in one corner of the living room and then unrolled an Oriental rug so vast that its edges curled up against the walls, blocking the electrical sockets. After directing the placement of each piece, Jennifer and her boyfriend sought me out in my tiny bedroom, whose only furnishings were a desk, a bed, and a bookcase fashioned from plastic milk crates. Owing to my budget, many of the books inside it were stolen from the university bookstore; I'd never bought books before, and couldn't believe how expensive the damned things were.

"We figured out everyone's share of the new living room," the boyfriend said. "Yours is five hundred and ten."

I laughed out loud. "But I didn't order any of it."

"Well, you'll benefit from it, won't you?" Jennifer said. This was my first encounter with a line of reasoning that would echo through my years at Princeton: even unbidden privileges must be paid for. Tuition, the university liked to tell us, covered only a fraction of the cost of our education. What's more, the benefits of a Princeton degree were so far-reaching and long-lasting, supposedly, that for the duration of our lives we would be expected to give money to various university funds and causes. I'd assumed that a deal was a deal when Princeton admitted me, but I was wrong. The price of getting in—to the university itself, and to the great world it promised to open up—was an endless dunning for nebulous services that weren't included in the initial quote.

After I told my roommates to stop bothering me, they convened a meeting in the common room and voted to ban me from touching any item, including the rug, that I had not bought stock in. This put the entire suite—except for the bathroom, my bedroom, and the hallway leading to the front door—off limits to me. I raged inside. The common

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room had evolved into a concentrated version of what the whole campus had come to represent for me: a private association of the powerful that I'd been permitted to visit on a day pass, which, I sensed, could be revoked as suddenly as it had been issued.

I avoided my roommates and focused on my classwork. I chose to concentrate on English, since it sounded like something I might already know. I assumed that my classmates and I would study the classics and analyze their major themes, but instead we were buffeted, almost from day one, with talk of "theory," whatever that was. The basic meanings of the poems, short stories, and plays drawn from the hefty Norton anthologies that anchored our entry-level reading lists were treated as trivial, almost beneath discussion; what mattered, we learned, were our "critical assumptions."

I, for one, wasn't aware of having any. Until I was sixteen or so, my only reading had consisted of Hardy Boys mysteries, books on UFOs, world almanacs, a Time-Life history of World War II, and a handful of pulpy best sellers linked to movies (*The Day of the Jackal* and *The Exorcist* stand out), which I'd read for their sex scenes. I knew a few great authors' names from scanning dust jackets in the town library and watching the better TV quiz shows, but the only serious novels I'd ever cracked were *Moby-Dick* and *Frankenstein*—both sold to me by a crafty high school teacher as gripping tales of adventure, which they weren't.

With no stored literary material about which to harbor critical assumptions, I relied on my gift for mimicking authority figures and playing back to them their own ideas disguised as conclusions that I'd reached myself. The deployment of key words was crucial, as the recognition of them had been on the SATs. With one professor the charm was "ambiguity." With another "heuristic" usually did the trick. Even when a poem or a story fundamentally puzzled me, I found that I could save face through terminology, as when I referred to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as "semiotically unstable."

The need to finesse my ignorance through such stunts left me feeling hollow and vaguely hunted. I sought solace in the company of other frauds (we seemed to recognize one another instantly), and together we refined our acts. We toted around books by Jacques Derrida, and spoke of "playfulness" and "textuality." We laughed at the notion of "authorial intention" and concluded, before reading even a hundredth of it, that the Western canon was illegitimate, an expression of powerful group interests that it was our sacred duty to transcend—or, failing that, to systematically subvert. In this rush to adopt the latest attitudes and please the younger and hipper of our instructors—the ones who drank with us in the Nassau Street bars and played the Clash on the tape decks of their Toyotas as their hands crept up pants and skirts—we skipped straight from ignorance to revisionism, deconstructing a body of literary knowledge that we'd never constructed in the first place.

I came to suspect that certain professors were on to us, and I wondered if they, too, were actors. In classroom discussions, and even when grading essays, they seemed to favor us over the hard workers, whose patient, sedimentary study habits were ill adapted, I concluded, to the new world of antic postmodernism that I had mastered almost without effort. To thinkers of this school, great literature was a con, and I—a born con man who hadn't read any great literature and was looking for any excuse not to—was eager to agree with them.

This lucky convergence of intellectual fashion and my illiteracy restored my pride and emboldened me socially. Maybe I belonged at Princeton after all. I took up with a moody crowd of avant-gardists, who hung around one of the campus theaters tripping on acid and staging absurdist plays by Sartre, Albee, and Ionesco. One production, which I assisted with, required the audience to contemplate a stage filled with unoccupied metal folding chairs. My friends and I stood snickering in the wings, making bets on how long it would take for people to leave.

Who knew that serious drama could be like this? Who knew that the essence of high culture would turn out to be teasing the poor fools who still believed in it? Certainly no one back in Minnesota. Well, the joke was on them, and I was in on it. I could never go back there now, not with a straight face. It embarrassed me that I'd ever even lived there, knowing that people here on the East Coast (people like me—the new me) had been laughing at us all along.

It frightened me that had I not reached Princeton, I might never have discovered this; I might have remained a rube forever. This realization altered my basic loyalties. I decided that it was time to leave behind the folks who'd raised me and stand with the people who'd clued me in.

My closest friend as a junior was V, a Pakistani boy who'd disappointed his family—and even, as he told it, his nation's leaders—by leaving his intended major, electrical engineering, for philosophy. He claimed that his decision was purely intellectual, but I suspected a social motive. Among the artsy eastern prep-school graduates who composed the campus's tastemaking elite, philosophy was in vogue just then, especially the arcane linguistic variety that allowed one to brandish Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, whereas engineering was deemed unsuitable for anyone other than indentured Third Worlders whose governments were paying their tuition in return for future work designing missiles and irrigation projects.

This had been V's deal. Once he broke it, whether out of conviction or in deference to fashion, he couldn't go home again. That made two of us.

One cold winter night we set out down Prospect Ave-

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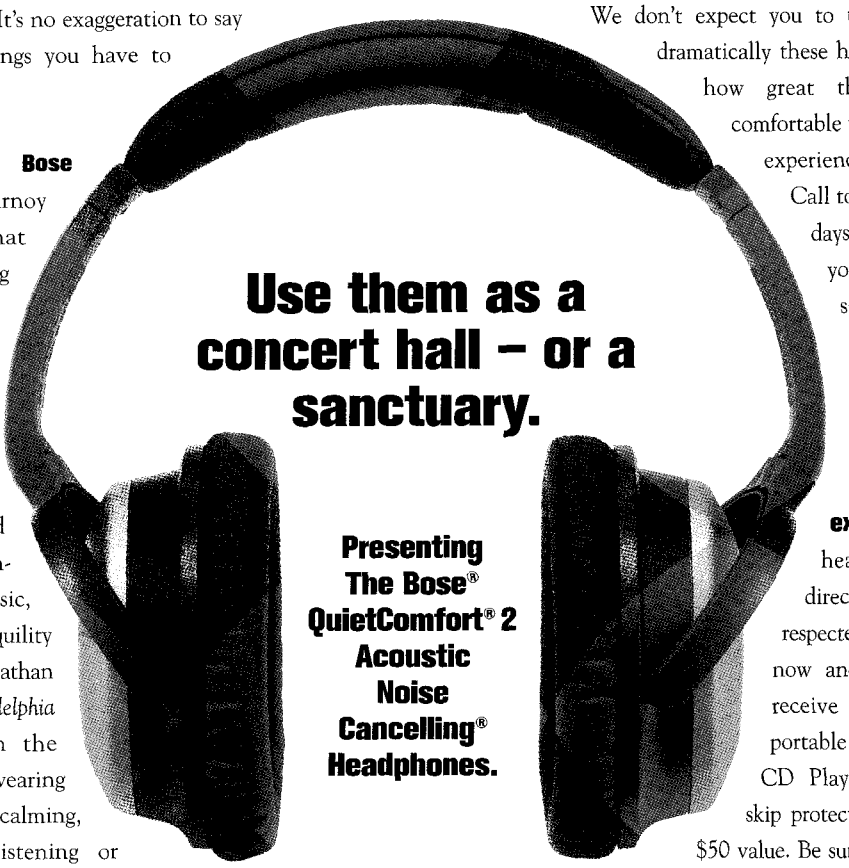

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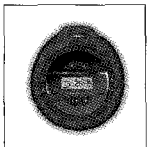

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nue toward one of the eating clubs that wouldn't have us. On the way we talked Wittgenstein, loudly, so that others would hear us. Drunk on a mixture of beer, resentment, and longing, we were determined to crash a party we'd heard about. Girls went by, but not a lot of them, and few that were available to our kind. Twelve years after Princeton had gone coed, the campus sex ratio still favored males by a considerable margin, placing a premium on pretty women that only rich boys and quarterbacks could pay. Our shape-shifting, agile, approval-seeking brains may have entitled us to live and study with the children of the ruling class, but not to mate with them.

This was the system's great flaw, and it enraged us. A pure meritocracy, we'd discovered, can only promote; it can't legitimize. It can confer success but can't grant knighthood. For that it needs a class beyond itself: the high-born genealogical peerage that aptitude testing was created to supplant with a cast of brainy up-and-comers. But we still needed to impress them: the WASP New Englanders with weekend coke habits, well-worn deck shoes, and vaguely leftish politics devised in reaction to their parents' conservatism, to which they'd slowly return as they aged. They didn't have our test scores, but they had style, a charismatic aura of entitlement, and V and I were desperate for a piece of it.

This was the system's great flaw, and it enraged us. A pure meritocracy, we'd discovered, can only promote; it can't legitimize. It can confer success but can't grant knighthood.

Somehow we slipped past the door into a room jammed with handsome, arrhythmic dancers in pastel polo shirts with turned-up collars. When we tried to join the fun, the crowd contracted and squeezed us out in a kind of reflexive mass immune response. We retreated to the professionally staffed bar, and in no time I was drunk and plotting revenge.

I targeted a girl with pearl earrings whose solid, columnar figure, husky voice, and rubber-banded sheaf of wheaty hair held no physical attraction for me but aroused my inner revolutionary. Like a frustrated stableboy in an old novel, I wanted to seduce and ruin her. Amazingly, we ended up alone on the bare wood floor of an empty upstairs room. The girl lay under me, kissing with a suction that actually drew blood from my chapped lips. She tugged at my zipper and muttered hearty obscenities. Her passion was frank, elemental, and intimidating, permitting me no illusion of domination. I was servicing a fair-haired warrior goddess, bred to lead and to give birth to leaders.

But she was drunker than I knew; as the act began in earnest, she fell asleep—a total power outage. Should I press on? Here was my chance to vent a primitive fury on a symbol of everything that tortured me.

I couldn't do it. I fled downstairs, found V, and made him leave with me. On the walk back to his room he said, "What assholes."

"We're just as bad," I said. I didn't explain.

We sobered up in V's room by drinking coffee. As he tended to do when pressured by strong emotion, he launched into one of his disquisitions on language, and I chimed in with my own thoughts now and then, though my mind was on the girl back at the club. V's point, I gathered, was his usual one: words referred to other words, not to the world, and the noblest, grandest words, such as "truth" and "God," referred to nothing. Or maybe I misunderstood. It hardly mattered. It had been years since I'd known what I was talking about, and I no longer expected such conversations to educate or enlighten me; I just expected them to sound good. They were catechisms, incantations. They reminded me of the short-lived high school class in which we'd tried to learn German phonetically, by repeating sentences from tapes.

Tonight, though, I couldn't bear the posing, and I understood why V's government was mad at him. I excused myself to use the bathroom, filled a glass with water from the tap, looked in the mirror, and beheld an absence—nothing but the reflected door behind me and a bathrobe hanging on a hook. Where was my face? I knew it still existed, because I could feel it with my fingertips, but I couldn't find it with my eyes—a hallucination in reverse.

"I need a doctor," I told V when I came back. "How late is the clinic open?"

He ignored me. He'd been holding a thought about Hegel all this time and was writing it down so that he wouldn't forget it later. I left him and walked back down Prospect Avenue toward the elitist eating club, thinking that if I could find the girl I'd left there and have a normal human word with her, it would help me see my face again. But the party was over and the door was locked.

I didn't have to wait long for my crack-up.

During a Chaucer lecture the next semester I lost the ability to discern the boundaries between spoken words. Professor F. opened his mouth and out flowed slushy streams of sonic nonsense with no meter, no structure, no definition. I closed my notebook and managed to isolate a few short phrases from the garbled flow, but I couldn't link them into sentences.

I decided I was tired, and I must have been, because once I lay down, I slept for twenty hours. When I finally got up, the floor felt like a waterbed, and I had to brace myself against a chair. A moment later I heard rats inside the walls. I knew that the noises came from warming water pipes, but

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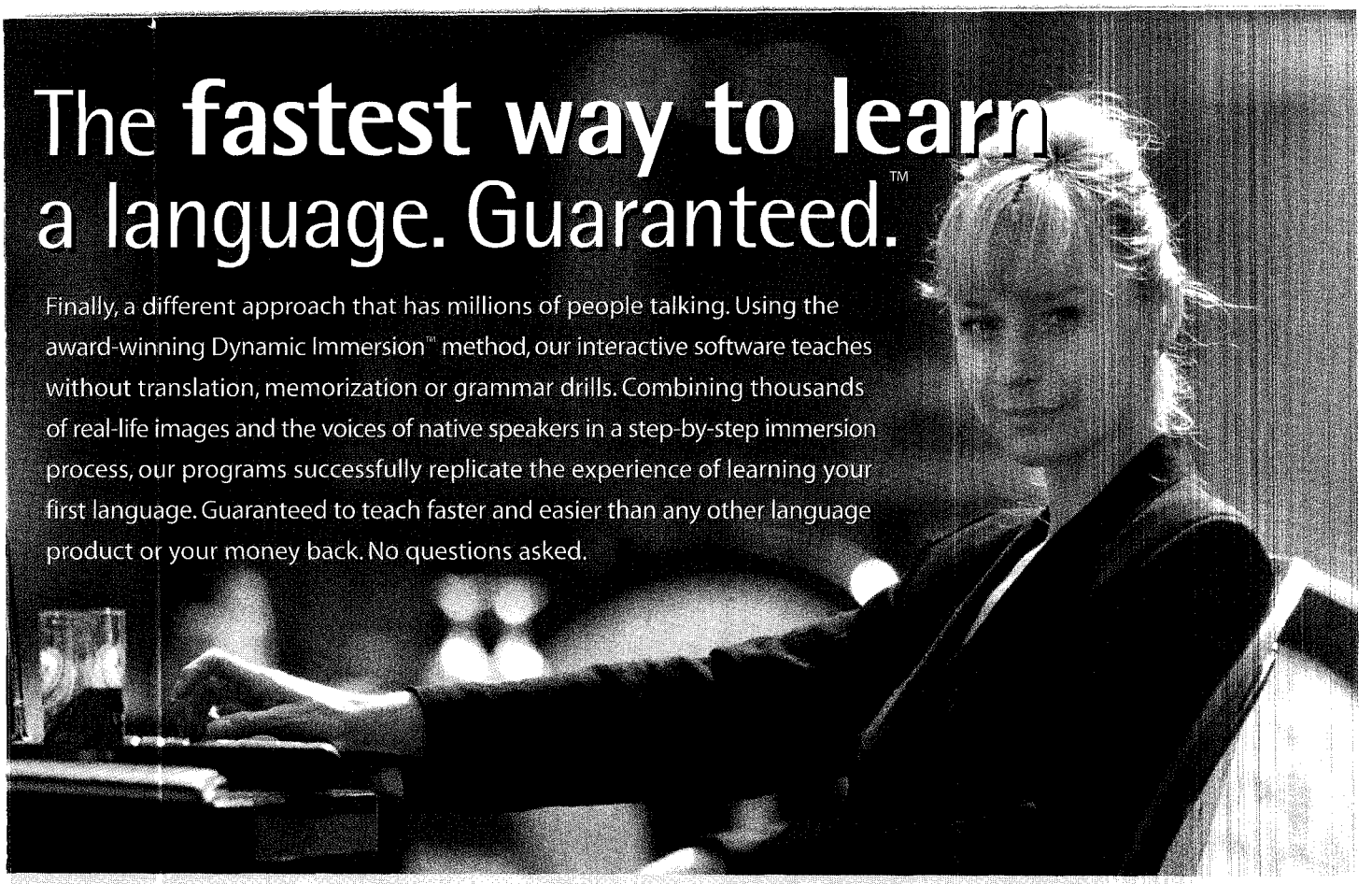

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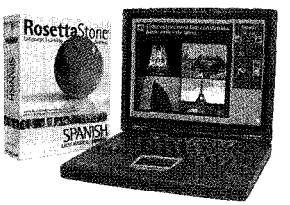

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I couldn't stop picturing hungry rodents nibbling through the plaster into my room.

I started skipping classes, which wasn't like me, since the heart of my personal program for winning distinction, despite my baseline bafflement, was the diligent daily maintenance of friendly relations with my professors. I'd learned that by showing up early to say hello and chat with them, staying late to ask them extra questions, and dropping in during office hours to drink their stale coffee and let them bum my cigarettes (they had always just quit smoking, it seemed, but without conviction), I could pull down Bs, at least. If I also showed signs of having read their books (particularly if the course did not require me to), I could manage As.

But I'd grown too blurred to keep up this trickery. I embraced dissociation instead.

There is no drug scene like an Ivy League drug scene. Kids can't just get high; they have to know why they're doing it. They have to back up their mischief with manifestos. The most popular one among the students I knew held that drugs, especially psychedelic drugs, helped to break down the rigid mental structures that restricted one's full humanity. This belief in creative derangement came down to us from Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and the Beat poets, but in my case it didn't quite apply, because my mind had little structure to begin with.

Our LSD sessions were the opposite of parties; they brought on bouts of crushing introspection and spirals of anxious cerebration. One evening at dinner Adam, my ex–pre-med friend, slipped me a square of perforated blotter paper and invited me to walk with him to the Institute for Advanced Study, a lofty think tank secluded in the woods. The place was best known as a haven for world-class physicists, including Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein, and through its golden windows we glimpsed the silhouettes of Nobel Prize winners, their heads surrounded by pulsing pink coronas that persisted even when we blinked. Now and then someone would pass us in the darkness, absorbed, we suspected, in algebraic reveries related to fusion reactors and plasma beams. Toward midnight we sat down under a tree—a benevolent presence that seemed to offer shelter from the sinister brilliance all around us—and reached the conclusion that Princeton was a portal for arrogant, Luciferian energies bent on the overthrow of God and Nature. We vowed to fight back. Scooping up clods of mud, we smeared it on our faces and then danced like druids, at last attracting attention from a guard whose flashlight beam swarmed with photons the size of snowflakes. He asked us what we were doing. "Repenting," we said.

Every month or so one of my acid-head friends would crack, and the mood of our demimonde would darken. One night at an off-campus communal house a buddy of mine who studied architecture mixed peyote with amphetamines and decided that the key to time travel was to stand in the basement and repeat the mantra "I am willing, sir." After he'd chanted for three hours, we tried to rescue him, but he punched and kicked until we backed away. Toward morning we found him praying on his knees wearing only his boxer shorts and socks. He was holding a lighted white candle, and in its radiance we could see teardrops dripping off his chin.

Then there was the girl who climbed onto the rail of her dormitory's interior staircase and hurled herself onto a landing four floors down, clutching a copy of *Anna Karenina*. She survived, but she had to wear a back brace for the rest of the semester. She told me she'd jumped to prove her love for Adam and would do it again unless he married her. Her voice was rough and lumpy (from tranquilizers?), and her hands slowly opened and closed like gasping fish.

My aphasia worsened by the day. I could feel words disappearing from my memory like defective bulbs in a strand of Christmas lights. My right eyelid twitched when I read. Straight lines of print rippled and broke apart. My education was running in reverse as my mind shed its outermost layer of signs and symbols and shrank back to its mute, preliterate core.

When summer vacation arrived, a few weeks later, I chose to stay in Princeton and find a job rather than go home and shock my family with my listlessness and dissipation. I also set out to rebuild my brain.

My breakdown climaxed with a strange prank that could have been taken straight from a bad novel about collegiate social Darwinism. I was flying on acid in the Terrace Club library, along with a couple of visual-arts majors who were trying their hands at Pollock-style "action painting," when in walked Leslie, a handsome blond campus prince—the descendant of a legendary industrialist—whom I knew from our vicious little theater scene but had never felt worthy of engaging in conversation.

"Walter, may I talk to you?" he said. I was astonished that he knew my name.

I followed him outside to his car, a new European sports coupe with leather seats, where he asked me to help him with a "trust experiment" related to his sociology thesis. He couldn't describe the experiment, he said, because it might prejudice the results, and I didn't press him. I was glad to help. This was the social break I'd waited years for.

Leslie started the car as I buckled in next to him. His instructions were simple: don't speak and don't resist. Then he blindfolded me with a strip of fuzzy dark cloth. He turned on a Laurie Anderson tape full blast—a gale of

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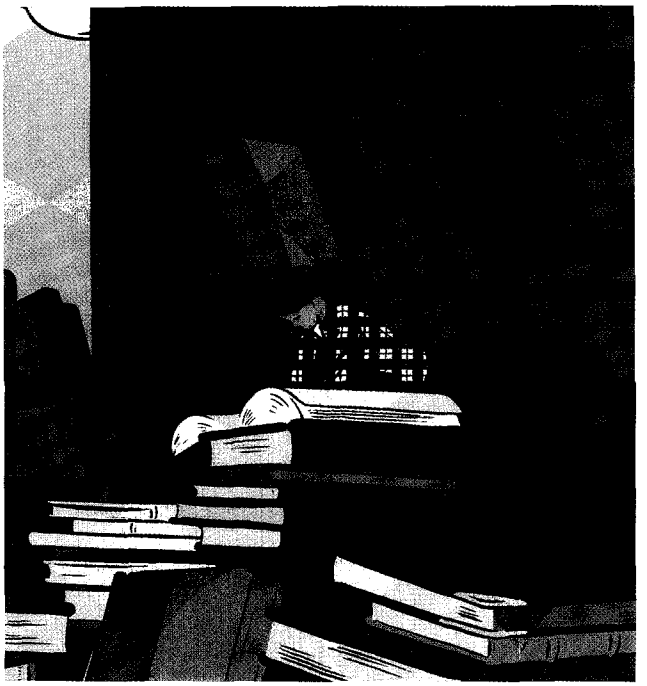
futuristic electronica that made me ashamed of my Top 40 tastes—and drove without stopping for what seemed like an hour, ending up on a bumpy stretch of road that I took to be rural and remote. At some point my blindfold loosened and slipped down, and I resecured it without being asked.

The car stopped moving. Leslie got out, walked around to my side, opened the door, set his hands on my shoulders, and marched me forward across an expanse of spongy, uneven earth. He halted and commanded me to kneel, urging me down by pressing on my skull. I suspected by then that I'd been lured into a sadistic hazing ritual, but instead of lashing out or fleeing, I fantasized about the sort of club that I'd been deemed worthy of auditioning for.

"Remove the blindfold," Leslie said.

When I raised my dazzled eyes, I saw, about fifty yards



in front of me, surrounded by stately trees, an actual castle, with countless tall windows and pediments and columns. In the center of its crescent driveway stood an enormous dry fountain of leaping cupids.

"My family's estate," Leslie said. "Behold, poor serf! Behold a power you will never know!"

With that he ran back to his car and drove away.

It took me three hours, walking and hitchhiking, to make it back to the campus. The LSD turned the trip into an odyssey of spectral laughing faces in the sky and dark, miasmic whirlpools underfoot. When I finally lay down in my room, I asked myself why I'd been chosen for this elaborate humiliation, and concluded that the answer lay in the success of a play on, of all subjects, 1960s pop art that I'd written and staged. I burned with shame for obeying Leslie's orders and blamed the drugs for my craven passivity, though I knew deep down that the problem was ambition. The drugs I could give up, but not the ambition.

When summer vacation arrived, a few weeks later, I chose to stay in Princeton and find a job rather than go home and shock my family with my listlessness and dissipation. I also set out to rebuild my brain.

I bought a dictionary and a thesaurus and instituted a daily regimen of linguistic calisthenics. My alarm clock woke me every morning at five, and for the next three hours I'd lie in bed, with my reference books propped up against my knees, and repeat aloud, in alphabetical order, every word on every single page, along with its definitions and major synonyms. I found the ritual humbling but soothing, and for the first time in my academic career I could feel myself making measurable strides, however tiny. "Militate." "Militia." "Milk." I spent as much energy on the easy words as I did on the hard ones—an act of contrition for squandering my high-percentile promise.

My job, at Firestone Library, helped advance this program of self-styled mental reconstruction. Working under a young crew boss who belonged to a self-improvement cult led by Werner Erhard, the founder of est, I emptied quarter-mile-long shelves of books, loaded them onto rolling metal carts, and transferred them to new shelves, one floor down, in perfect Dewey decimal order. When breaks were called, I opened whichever volume I happened to be holding at the moment and read until it was time to go to work again, picking up reams of miscellaneous knowledge about such topics as Zoroastrianism and the history of animal husbandry. And unlike the material from my classes and lectures, these fragments stuck with me—maybe because I'd collected them for their own sake, not as cards to be played at final-exam time and then forgotten when a new hand was dealt.

One day, during lunch, my boss sat down beside me while I was reading up on Zarathustra, whom I'd known before then only as a word in the title of a book by Nietzsche that I'd often argued with V about, despite never having gotten through the preface.

"Perpetual self-betterment," my boss said. "That's man's purpose on earth, you know."

I nodded.

"Can you come to a meeting of people who share your drive?" he said. "It's absolutely free of charge."

"I'm sorry. I have to do this thing alone."

"What thing?"

"Reconnecting certain wires."

By August, I felt human again. The hollow feeling behind my forehead was replaced by a reassuring fullness. The tics and twitches subsided. By all appearances, I'd saved myself—at least for the time being. With graduation just a year away and no firm career plans or even any career desires (my vague interest in writing poetry didn't qualify), the only game I knew how to play—scaling the American meritocratic mountain, not to gain wisdom but just because it was there—was, I feared, about to end.

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Making money didn't interest me. While my classmates streamed into on-campus interviews with Wall Street brokerage firms (becoming an "arbitrageur" was all the rage then, even among students who as juniors had vowed to spend their lives painting or composing), I cast about for another test to take, another contest to compete in. I needed medals, acceptance letters, status. To me, wealth and influence were trivial by-products of improving one's statistical scores in the great generational tournament of worthiness. The score itself was the essential prize.

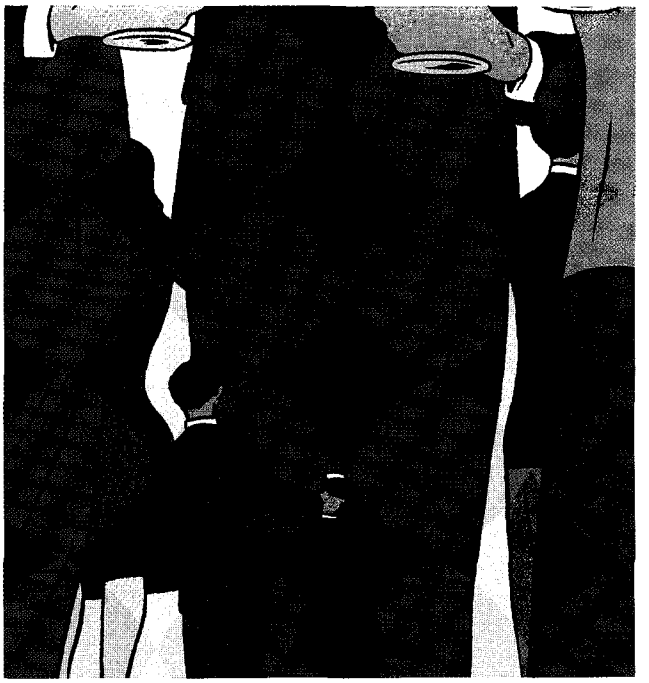
I applied for two scholarships to Oxford, an institution I regarded much as I'd once regarded Princeton—as a sociocultural VIP room that happened to hold classes in the back. The first was the Rhodes, created to fashion leaders for some future utopian global order. Why I imagined that I was "Rhodes material"—which at Princeton meant someone resembling Bill Bradley, our most widely known recipient of the honor—I had no idea. The other students I knew of who had applied were conspicuous campus presences, top athletes and leaders of student government, whereas I was a nervous loner in an old raincoat whose most notable accomplishment was writing and staging a blank-verse play loosely based on Andy Warhol. Still, I sensed I had a chance. I'd learned by then that the Masters of Advancement use a rough quota system in their work, reserving a certain number of wild-card slots for overreaching oddballs.

When a letter arrived informing me that I'd been chosen as a state finalist, I bought a blue suit on credit and flew back to Minnesota for my interviews. A doorman at the Minneapolis Club directed me to a gloomy paneled room, where my nametagged fellow candidates were enjoying a get-acquainted cocktail party with the members of the committee that would formally screen us the next morning.

I armed myself with a cheese cube on a napkin and a glass of red wine and strode into the fray, looking for someone important to impress, but my rivals had gotten a jump on me and wouldn't make space in the tight perimeters around the professors and business people tasked with assessing our leadership potential. I noticed that none of the other candidates were drinking their wine; they were using their glasses as props. I looked down at my empty goblet. Caught out again.

Seeing my rivals up close unsettled me. Back when I took the SATs, the contest had been impersonal, statistical, waged against an anonymous national peer group. This time the competition was all too personal—about a dozen of us remained. One short-haired young woman in a dark suit was holding forth on national health-care policy to a man who kept looking past her at a prettier girl whose panty lines were discernible through her skirt. A handsome young brute whose tag identified him as a West Point cadet was discussing his fitness regimen with a lady on the committee who seemed to be sleeping standing up. Every few minutes everyone changed partners, like dancers in a Jane Austen ballroom scene. What expert mixers they were! I hated them.

By the time I managed to corner a few committee members, I was feeling drunk and squirrelly. To give the irresistible impression of humble origins transcended, I affected a lazy backwoods drawl and combined it with a Sunday-best vocabulary straight out of my thesaurus exercises. I got off the word "heuristic" once, a magical bit of scholastic legerdemain, but I pronounced it in the manner of Johnny Cash. I knew I sounded demented, but I couldn't stop myself. Even worse, I'd lit a cigarette, making me the party's only smoker aside from a bearded old fellow with



a pipe whom I knew to be an English professor at a local college. I approached him, seeking cover for my vice, and babbled away about my love of Whitman, a name I'd picked out of a hat. He seemed to sense this.

At the end of the party we drew times for our morning interviews. I drew the first slot: seven sharp. I showed up pale and trembling and dehydrated, speckled with crumbs from a cinnamon bun I'd wolfed. My rivals were already seated in the waiting room, some of them reading *The New York Times*. This was a masterly touch—one I wished I'd thought of.

My name was called, and I sat down in a conference room at a long table of poker-faced interrogators equipped with pencils, clipboards, and questionnaires. "What, in your opinion, is the primary problem facing our world today?" one woman asked, not even giving me time to sip my coffee.

The moisture inside my mouth evaporated; I'd expected

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a little small talk first. I knew in my gut that to answer the question creatively would be a mistake; these were sober, high-minded people, dedicated to serving humanity by preselecting future American presidents and United Nations ambassadors. The only issues worthy of their seriousness, I strongly suspected, were the obvious two: poverty and nuclear proliferation. My chance to exhibit originality would come with the inevitable follow-up: "And how would you deal with this problem?" That's where the challenge lay. I wanted to bring in poetry—but how? By calling for a new, transformative literature pledged to the empowerment of the voiceless through a concern with the basic global values of justice and mutual respect?

That might be a winner, if I could just remember it.

But I couldn't. Instead I said, "Miscommunication. I think that's the biggest problem we face these days."

"Expand on that," a quiet female voice said. "Miscommunication between whom?"

I offered a list of miscommunicators that included governments and their subjects, men and women, and even—

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absurdly—animals and human beings. Sometime during my speech I realized I'd lost. I'd never lost at anything before, not even a spelling bee, and the feeling was like waking on the Moon after going to bed on Earth. No sounds, no light, no air, no gravity.

I returned to the waiting room ten minutes later. My rivals scanned my face for clues: how had my interview changed the odds for them? I gave them more information than they deserved, hoping to win their favor for the future. Someday one of them might run the country, and I wanted to be remembered as a good sport.

"You're safe," I told them all. "I screwed it up."

They couldn't help smiling. Then one girl hugged me. "You really shouldn't consider it a loss," she said. "You should feel honored you reached the final group." I returned the hug and left the building, unwilling to wait for the winners to be named. Later I found out that one of them was the girl who'd tried to boost my spirits, which made her gesture seem patronizing in retrospect. She knew she was bound for the sharp end of the pyramid, and was merely practicing her royal manners.

I was two weeks away from an interview for another scholarship, sponsored by the Keasbey Foundation, less coveted than the Rhodes but more exclusive (only a handful were given out each year). Yet my broken momentum had sapped my confidence, and I did nothing to prepare myself. I drifted through classes and lectures, astonished anew by how little four years of college had affected me. The great poems and novels mystified me still, even the few I'd managed to read, and my math skills, once adequate for the SATs, had shriveled to nothing through lack of use. The lone science class I'd been required to take, an introductory geology course, was graded pass/fail, and though I'd passed it (barely), I still wasn't sure what "igneous" meant.

All around me friends were securing places in grad schools and signing contracts with worldwide corporations, but I found myself without prospects, in a vacuum. I'd never bothered to contemplate the moment when the quest for trophies would end and the game of trading on them would begin. Once, I'd had nowhere to go but up. Now, it seemed, I had nowhere to go at all.

For my interview I drove down to Philadelphia with Princeton's other Keasbey nominee, the football team's starting quarterback. I'd never expected to meet him in this life. He was smaller than I thought he'd be, and a faster, more impressive talker. Under his short haircut he seemed sad, though, as if he, too, feared his life had already run its course. His car was old, not a quarterback's car at all, and I realized that he wasn't one anymore, except in memory. The season was over.

In the elegant conference room of a downtown law firm the Keasbey Foundation's trustees explained the peculiar history of their fellowship to me. Its founder, now deceased, was a wealthy daughter of industry who'd never married. One spring, however, as a blushing society girl, she'd attended an Oxford college ball with an English boy whose demeanor had so charmed her that she later devised a way to re-create him by funding the education of young Americans who, with the proper training, it was hoped, might wear his cummerbund. Pure Henry James, this story. The trustees went on to tell us that Miss Keasbey had intended the fellowship for young men only, but a court challenge had made young women eligible.

The trustees interviewed the ex-quarterback first, which gave me an hour to work on my persona as a young aristocrat in the rough. If my schooling had taught me anything, it was how to mold myself—my words, my range of references, my body language—into whatever shape the day required, and by the time I sat down in the conference room, I'd hit on a pose of dreamy provincial yearning à la the youthful Tennessee Williams, but marginally more virile. When asked who my favorite author was, I answered Lord Byron—for the life he'd lived as much as for his writings. (I might not have understood Romantic poetry, but I knew what the names of the poets signified.)

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When someone brought up my D in Spanish—that glaring stain on my academic record, which the Rhodes committee had also noted, provoking in me much defensive stuttering—I confessed that I'd stayed up late drinking before the final and let it go at that. This elicited broad smiles. The next question touched on my athletic interests—or, rather, my apparent lack thereof. I replied that I liked to exert myself in solitude, by taking long walks. "Very British," one man said.

I could feel in the trustees' handshakes, as we parted, a distinct congratulatory warmth. I'd won again, and by doing what I did best: exploiting my meticulously indexed collection of lofty buzzwords, charming gestures, and apt allusions. Just days before, I'd felt a reckoning looming, but now I was off to Oxford. I'd been spared.

"I flubbed it," the ex-quarterback told me on the drive back. "How did you do, you think?"

I didn't dare tell him.

I'd learned a lot since I'd aced the SATs, about the system, about myself, and about the new class the system had created, which I was now part of, for better or for worse. The class that runs things.

The summer before I left for Oxford, I found myself back home, drinking beer with a high school friend in a pickup truck parked next to the river. His name was Karl, and he'd stuck around to lend a hand on his family's dairy farm. Most everyone else from our crowd had moved away, part of the ongoing small-town diaspora that will someday completely depopulate rural America. Our old buddies worked on salmon boats in Alaska. They dealt cards in Las Vegas. They sold Fords in Denver. Some, having grown fed up with low-wage jobs, were studying computer programming or starting small businesses with borrowed money. I had a hard time imagining their lives, especially if they'd married and had kids, but I didn't have to: they were gone. I was gone too, up a ladder into the clouds. Up a ladder made of clouds.

"So, what are your views on Emerson?" Karl asked me.

We'd been discussing books, at his request. He'd looked me up that night for this very purpose. While I'd been off at Princeton, polishing my act, he'd become a real reader and also a devoted Buddhist. He said he had no one to talk to, no one who shared his interest in art and literature, so when he'd heard I was home, he'd driven right over. We had a great deal in common, Karl said.

But we didn't, in fact, and I didn't know how to tell him this. To begin with, I couldn't quote the Transcendentalists as accurately and effortlessly as he could. I couldn't quote anyone. I'd honed more-marketable skills: for flattering those in authority without appearing to, for ranking artistic reputations according to the latest academic fashions, for matching my intonations and vocabulary to the background of my listener, for placing certain words in smirking quotation marks and rolling my eyes when someone spoke too earnestly about some "classic" work of "literature," for veering left when the conventional wisdom went right and then doubling back if the consensus changed.

Flexibility, irony, class consciousness, contrarianism. I'd gone to Princeton, and soon I'd go to Oxford, and these, I was about to tell Karl, are the ways one gets ahead now—not by memorizing old Ralph Waldo. I'd learned a lot since I'd aced the SATs, about the system, about myself, and about the new class the system had created, which I was now part of, for better or for worse. The class that runs things. The class that makes the headlines—that writes the headlines, and the stories under them.

But I kept all this to myself; I didn't tell Karl. He was a reader, a Buddhist, and an old friend, and there were some things he might not want to know. I wasn't so sure I wanted to know them either.

My cynicism had peaked, but later that summer something happened that changed me—not instantly but decisively. A month before I was scheduled to fly to England and resume my career as a facile ignoramus, I came down with a mild summer cold that lingered, festered, and turned into pneumonia, forcing me to spend two weeks in bed. One feverish night I found myself standing in front of a bookcase in the living room that held a row of fancy leather-bound volumes my mother had bought through the mail when I was little. Assuming that the books were chiefly decorative, I'd never even bothered to read their titles, but that night, bored and sick, I picked one up: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Then I did something unprecedented for me: I carried it back to my bedroom and actually read it—every chapter, every page. A few days later I repeated the feat with *Great Expectations*, another canonical stalwart that I'd somehow made it through Princeton without opening.

And so, belatedly, haltingly, and almost accidentally, it began: the education I'd put off while learning to pass as someone in the know. I wasn't sure what it would get me, whose approval it might win, or how long it might take to complete, but for once those weren't my first concerns. Alone in my room, exhausted and apprehensive, I no longer cared about self-advancement. I wanted to lose myself. I wanted to read. I wanted to find out what others thought.

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SPORTS NAMES IN THE NEWS

BY BRUCE MCCALL

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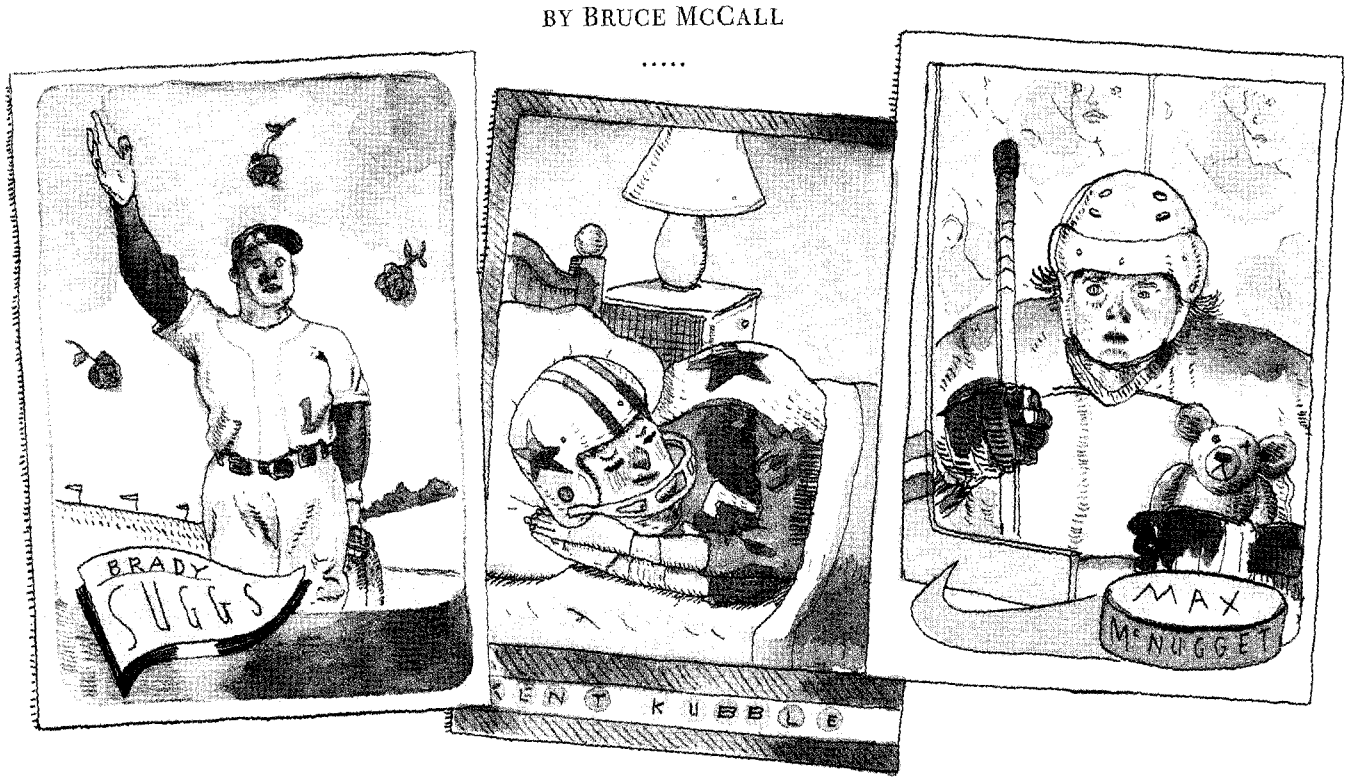

Basketball legend **HERB FUNGUS** was clocked early this morning by the local police driving his Lamborghini at 29 mph in a 30-mph zone and staying in his lane after attending an all-night party. "No weaving, no line crossing, nothing," marveled a police officer at the scene.

Outfielder **TY PESKO** spotted a suspicious character outside his team's clubhouse today, flaunting a large shopping bag full of banned steroids, and demanded that a nearby security guard kick him off the premises, pronto.

Slugging All-Star third baseman **BRADY SUGGS** has declined a $102 million Yankee contract offer and will stay with his financially troubled last-place club—"hopefully for the rest of my life," he beamed. "It would let the fans down if I just picked up and left, and they've been so darn nice to me. Loyalty works both ways, you know!"

TV and newspaper reporters have filed an official complaint against the notoriously approachable ten-time MVP **AL BOGUS** for following them around the clubhouse before and after games and butting in on other interviews to spill his innermost thoughts about his on- and off-field mistakes, his recent divorce, his alleged drug use, and world hunger. "Why can't he just leave us alone?" snarled one reporter.

BARRY BLITT

A parking-lot brawl that erupted outside a Houston after-hours club early today left five-time All-Pro tackle **KENT KUBBLE** unscathed as he lay sleeping in his hotel room twenty miles away, having turned in at 10:00 P.M. the previous night after watching *Everybody Loves Raymond* and phoning his kids back home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to say nighty-night.

Chosen first overall in the 2004 NBA draft, eighteen-year-old high school star **ALWON JIKES** was charged today with owing more than $13 in library fines after taking out several books last winter for the express purpose of indulging in an Edna St. Vincent Millay orgy and then failing to return them on time.

Toronto police officers discovered six teddy bears and cookie-baking paraphernalia in the trunk of a car being driven by hockey idol **MAX MCNUGGET** early today. The four-time goal-scoring leader was held for kidding and then released.

Chicago Bears Hall of Famer **TICONDEROGA WELBY JR.** has pleaded no contest to a charge of spousal non-abuse after giving his wife, Serena, a $100,000 diamond bracelet to make up for recently forgetting to pick up a quart of milk on the way home.

Veteran pitcher **OLAND TIGGLE**, who retired at the end of last season, announced today that he plans to stay retired. "I thought it through and made up my mind," he said, "and to reverse that decision now would make me out to be some kind of fickle idiot—and be so embarrassing."

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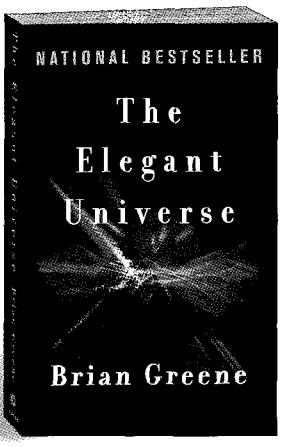
"A thrilling ride through a lovely landscape." —*Los Angeles Times*

"Compulsively readable.... Greene threatens to do for string theory what Stephen Hawking did for black holes." —*New York*



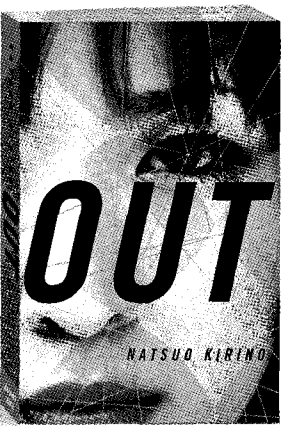
Also look for *The Fabric of the Cosmos* by Brian Greene, coming in February

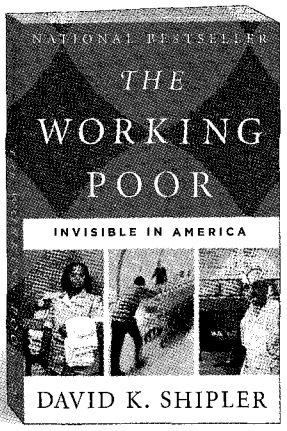
Winner of Japan's Grand Prix for Crime Fiction

Edgar Award Finalist

"A nervy thriller.... A potent cocktail of urban blight, perverse feminism and vigilante justice." –*The New York Times Book Review*

"Daring and disturbing.... *Out* is prepared to push the limits of this world—not only in violence and sex but also in human outlook.... It leaves you with a dry mouth." –*Los Angeles Times*





By the Pulitzer Prize Winner

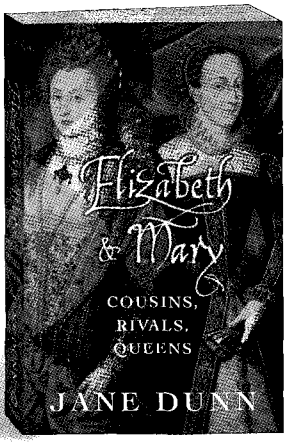
"This is clearly one of those seminal books that **every American should read and read now."** –*The New York Times Book Review*

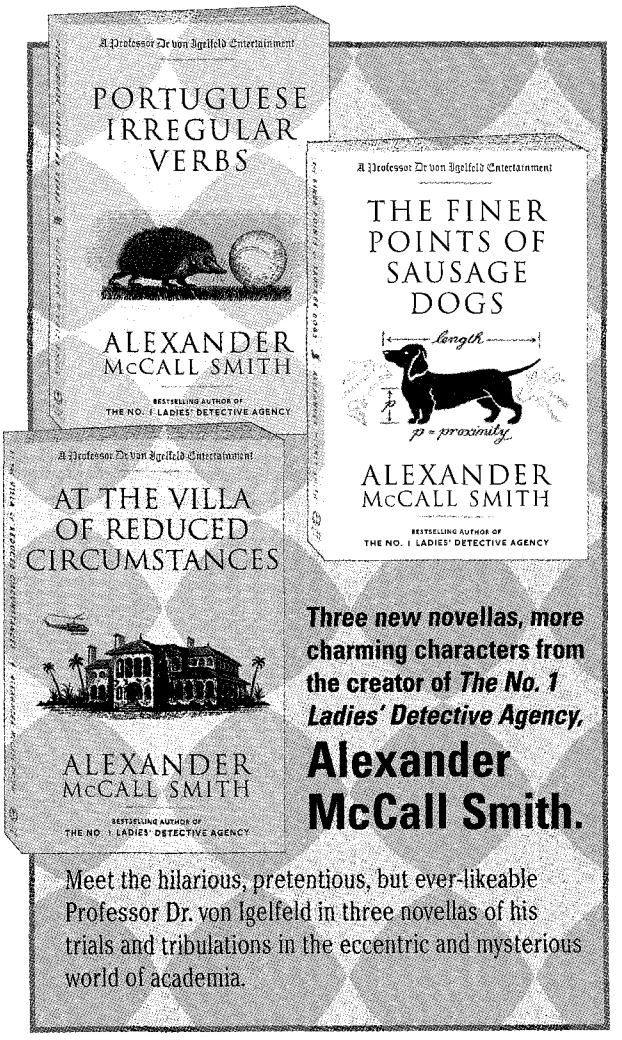
"Welcome and important.... Shipler manages to see all aspects of poverty—psychological, personal, societal—and examine how they're related." –*The Seattle Times*

"Wholly engrossing and sumptuous." –*Newsday*

"Balanced, nuanced.... Brilliantly conceived, elegantly executed, and compellingly readable." –*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"A perceptive, suspenseful account.... By the end of this satisfying book, one feels sympathy for both women." –*The New York Times Book Review*





Three new novellas, more charming characters from the creator of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency,*

Alexander McCall Smith.

Meet the hilarious, pretentious, but ever-likeable Professor Dr. von Igelfeld in three novellas of his trials and tribulations in the eccentric and mysterious world of academia.

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REVIEWED THIS MONTH:

V. S. Pritchett
by Jeremy Treglown
Born Losers
by Scott A. Sandage
War in the Wild East
by Ben Shepherd
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EDITOR'S CHOICE

An Exquisite Slogger

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Can it be that this book's subject, who died merely eight years ago, has fallen as far from favor as Jeremy Treglown suggests? Sadly, he probably has, because although Victor Sawdon Pritchett (born the year before Victoria's death, he was named for the reigning monarch) wrote novels, travel books, biographies, and memoirs, by far his greatest accomplishments were as a short-story writer and a critic. As Treglown, the former editor of the *TLS* and the biographer of Henry Green and Roald Dahl, correctly avers, Pritchett was "the greatest writer-critic since Virginia Woolf," but this hardly assures him a fashionable reputation. Story writers don't have the cachet of novelists, and Pritchett's elegant, impressionistic literary essays, which eschew jargon and theorizing, were and remain shunned by academe. Indeed, for much of his nearly century-spanning career (he came of age when Arnold Bennett, G. K. Chesterton, and H. G. Wells were the literary lions; he lived to hail Salman Rushdie and Ian McEwan) Pritchett seemed a throwback. As he famously declared in 1985: "If, as they say, I am a Man of Letters, I come, like my fellows, at the tail-end of a long and once esteemed tradition in English and American writing. We have no captive audience ... We are rarely academics, though we owe a great debt to scholars. We earn our bread and butter by writing for the periodicals that have survived ... We write to be readable and to engage the interest of what Virginia Woolf called 'the common reader.'" But if the term "man of letters" suggests a quaintly genteel, carpet-slippered ruminator, VSP (as he signed his pieces, and as his friends called him) didn't fit the image. Treglown rightly emphasizes his cosmopolitanism (a characteristic Pritchett shared with his friend George Orwell, that internationalist who, as Pritchett wrote, had "gone native in his own country"). Pritchett left England at twenty-one and spent the next six years as a journalist in Paris, Ireland, and Spain. (His profound understanding of the latter country—he probably knew it more deeply than any other British writer of his time—allowed him to avoid what he later called the "naive, Soviet poster-fed lyricism" about the Spanish Civil War that

V. S. PRITCHETT
by Jeremy Treglown
Random House

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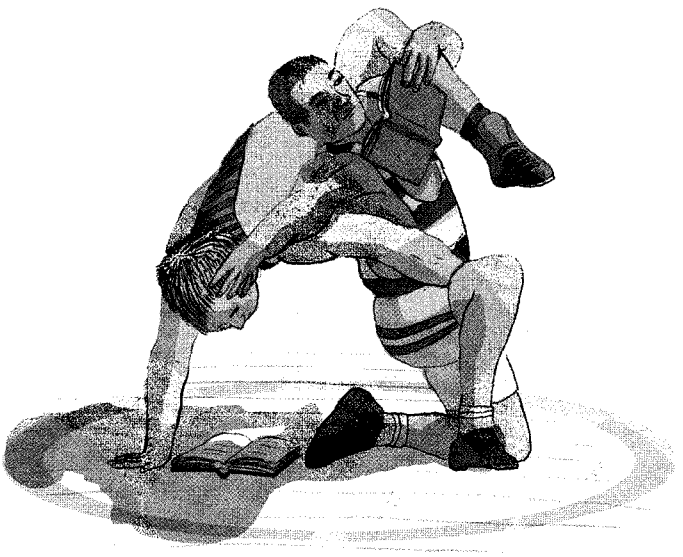
infected the literati of the 1930s, and his 1954 classic *The Spanish Temper* remains one of the most astute portraits of national character ever written.) He also brilliantly championed Continental writers, helping to introduce Italo Svevo, Giovanni Verga, and a host of others to Anglophone readers. Still less befitting the image of a man of letters was his lower-middle-class upbringing. Although he became perhaps the most established figure in the British literary establishment, Pritchett was forever haunted by his background, which provided the setting for much of his fiction. At best most fiction writers ignore the petite bourgeoisie; otherwise they denigrate it or turn its members into buffoons. Pritchett, however, did his class of origin the highest honor: he neither patronized nor made comic the salesmen, shopkeepers, small businessmen, and clerks who people his stories. This writer who relished human oddity endowed "ordinary" people with complex—in fact, extravagant—inner lives. Treglown concentrates on Pritchett's working life (his refreshingly brisk book, which manages to compress Pritchett's story into fewer than 260 pages of text, is among the most intelligent and perceptive depictions of a writer's habits and routine, and of the economics of a literary profession, that I've read). But he's especially acute in his assessment of the impact of Pritchett's early personal history on his career. As readers of Pritchett's memoir *A Cab at the Door* know (and as readers of his last and best novel, *Mr. Beluncle*, will recognize from its eponymous protagonist), his father was a Micawberish charlatan and a serial bankrupt (the cab at the door was the family's means of escaping the debt collectors; "He is so *vulgar*, so boring, so destructive," Pritchett wrote of his father, "I must write about him quickly, turn him into cash"). Forced to leave school at sixteen (he spent his next four years as a clerk in the docklands leather trade), Pritchett felt a lifelong need to catch up intellectually and a compulsion to achieve and maintain financial security in his chosen profession—a profession that was (and is) financially precarious at best. So he became one of the great autodidacts of modern literary history; as an old man even he was "appalled" by how much he'd read. (Ironically, his weekly "Books in General" essays in the *New Statesman* during the Second World War—which with style, easy erudition, and an utter lack of didacticism assessed the French, Russian, and English classics—are widely credited with educating a generation of ambitious and intellectually voracious British servicemen.) And he became a literary Stakhanovite. What he wrote of Gibbon applies equally to himself: "Sooner or later, the great men turn out to be all alike. They never stop working. They never lose a minute. It is very depressing." With routine and unrelenting toil Pritchett fashioned his exquisite short stories, his polished biographies and travel books, and his essays—conspicuous, as Treglown aptly puts it, for their "formal artistry." No single story or collection made his name; rather, he steadily accumulated a mountain of graceful and precise works.



LEIF PARSONS

But of course there was a price to pay for this—and much of it was paid by Pritchett's second wife, Dorothy, for whom he left his first wife and to whom he remained married for sixty-one years, until his death. Treglown's unobtrusive and understated portrait of that relationship is one of the few biographical studies to capture the complexities of a difficult married life, without assigning blame to either the subject or the subject's spouse. Although theirs was a passionate and sexually fulfilling marriage, it was hardly an equal one. Dorothy's role was not only that of a traditional wife of a famous writer but also that of a wife of an obsessively slogging one. It fell to her to type his endless series of drafts, to run the household and raise their children, to see that he worked unmolested when he was at home, and to wait for him in the country when he went to London on business (he was the literary editor of the *New Statesman* for some years, and was always an active participant in the London literary scene) or when he spent a semester at an American university to make money, as he did often after the war. Clearly, her happiness and ambitions were in essential ways subordinate to his. (It's impossible not to wince at her letter to him after he confessed to a wartime affair, in which she declared that "writers are extraordinary & special people … & therefore have special license, because it is important for them to develop every aspect of themselves & they cant do this on one poor ordinary female.") And just as clearly, she became an alcoholic fairly early in their marriage (though, it seems, after his wartime affair), which in many ways made his life a misery (after a long struggle she recovered in the late 1950s). A friend of Pritchett's observed that he was "addicted to writing like some people are to the bottle," and there was certainly a symbiotic relationship between those two addictions in the Pritchett marriage—though this seems never to have occurred to Victor. Until Treglown's revelations

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(which include VSP's long affair with an American divorcee) were published in Britain, late last year, the marriage was always described as an unusually happy and serene one—as it mostly was, in its own way. But of course any reader of Pritchett's fiction would know that there's always so much more to the lives of seemingly ordinary, quiet people.

ECONOMICS & SOCIETY

Born Losers, *by Scott A. Sandage* (Harvard). In this book about the cultural ramifications of economic failure in nineteenth-century America, Sandage has taken on an important and underexamined subject and scrutinized it in inventive ways, using unexpected and largely unmined sources. He's looked at this era of robust, full-throated capitalism from the perspective of the economic losers, who made up the great majority of Americans in business. Drawing on the scholarship that examines the multifaceted "market revolution" (and on a growing historical literature on bankruptcy and debtors), Sandage demonstrates how an emerging capitalist economy came to dominate nearly every aspect of daily life, thereby transforming cultural values. In short order, for example, ambition evolved from a discreditable to an admirable quality. And over the century the meaning of the word "failure" broadened significantly, from an incident in commercial life (a "breaking in business," as an early-nineteenth-century dictionary defined the word) to an identity (a wasted or ruined existence)—a change that shows the extent to which people came to be defined in terms of their market function. Sandage examines diaries and letters, business records, suicide notes (during the panic of 1837 Emerson wrote that "the land stinks with suicide"), bankruptcy cases, and charity requests (the heartbreaking so-called "begging letters" often written by the wives of broken men to the economic titans of the Gilded Age). But he draws most heavily on an astonishingly fertile set of documents: millions of nineteenth-century credit reports, compiled by the

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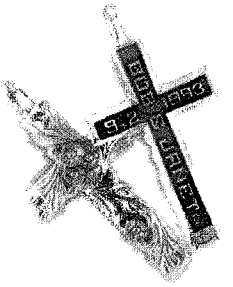

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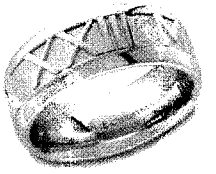
Your Names & Dates



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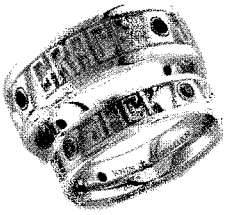

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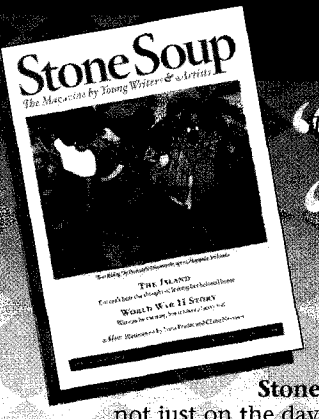

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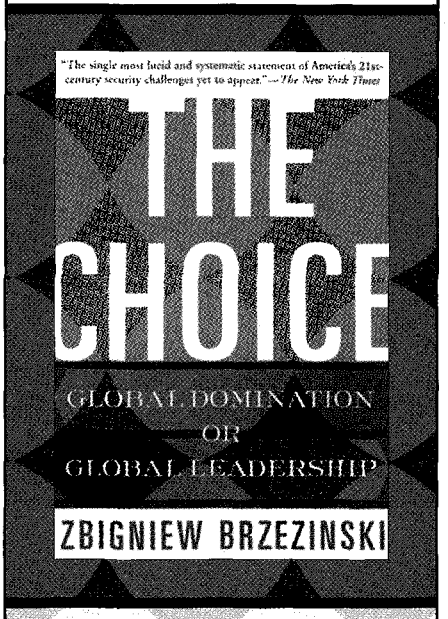

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Mercantile Agency (the progenitor of Dun & Bradstreet), which have hitherto more or less languished in the archives of the Harvard Business School.

As the geographical scale of commerce dramatically expanded, businessmen had to judge the trustworthiness of those with whom they had no face-to-face dealings. Enter Lewis Tappan—busybody, moral reformer, fervent abolitionist, and one of history's great snoops. Starting in 1841, on the foundations of an existing network of antislavery men, he built a vast national surveillance system to assess "the three Cs" (capital, character, and capacity) of men about whom subscribers to his agency paid for information. Within a decade the agency had recruited 2,000 informants throughout the country. (One of them was Abraham Lincoln. Sandage, by the way, tantalizingly reveals that the agency's report *on* Lincoln was mysteriously expunged after his assassination.) In a single year, 1871, the agency Tappan had founded (he sold it in 1858 to his manager, Robert Graham Dun) added 70,000 names to its records. The men it spied on might move, launch new careers, and even assume new identities; no matter. The agency claimed it could find and assess anyone in the United States—a crowd of 29 million—in seven days. But what makes these reports so extraordinary a historical source is their subjectivity and scope. With their complex, melodramatic narratives, flashbacks, and foreshadowings, they read as though the agency's spies and clerks were a band of frustrated novelists. Aside from their frequent errors and perhaps unavoidable sleaziness, they little resemble the dry and detached credit reports of today's TRW and its ilk. Rather, they scrutinized a subject's reputation, morals, abilities, finances, character, and potential. They might include gossip on his love life, and they usually contained such verdicts as "too fond of a spree," "fast liver," "doubtful character," and "worthless and always will be"—a conclusion that, by conflating economic and moral judgment, nicely shows how capitalism converted cultural norms to its own terms (a point also bolstered by the way credit slang rapidly entered American speech—such terms as "bad egg" and "good for nothing," initially used in these reports to describe the creditworthiness of individuals, soon devolved into general terms of moral opprobrium).

But although he's found a rich seam of material (one partially tapped, but exploited for very narrow purposes, by James D. Norris in his 1978 history of the early years of R. G. Dun & Co.), Sandage fails to elucidate fully the cultural significance of the sources he's exhaustively examined, and the various and often seemingly unrelated elements of his analysis frequently don't cohere. Moreover, this book exemplifies an annoying new trend. He's written a broad and original work, but Sandage or his publisher couldn't leave well enough alone. It used to be that professors proudly wrote about topics so minuscule that not even their fellow scholars could work up an appetite for the unnourishing results. Now, though, hip and on-the-make academics and university presses are fond of tarting up their books. They'll take a first-rate monograph that would be of interest to discerning general readers (in this case Sandage's Rutgers doctoral dissertation on the important but hardly sweeping subject "a cultural history of failure in the United States, 1819–1893"); append the thinnest and shortest chin-stroking epilogue, unsupported by original research but full of knowing and with-it cultural references (Sandage trots out Bob Dylan, Dilbert, Tommy Hilfiger, and that inevitable emblem of the zeitgeist, "the Columbine tragedy"); and affix a misleadingly grandiose subtitle (here, "A History of Failure in America"). None of this diminishes Sandage's real achievement, but this book isn't as ambitious and all-embracing as it promises to be. Still, it's ambitious enough.

MILITARY HISTORY

War in the Wild East, *by Ben Shepherd* (Harvard). The epic clash on the Eastern Front in the Second World War remains arguably the largest conflict

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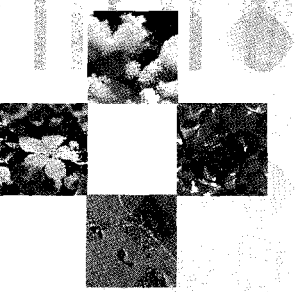

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The Torture Papers
The Road to Abu Ghraib

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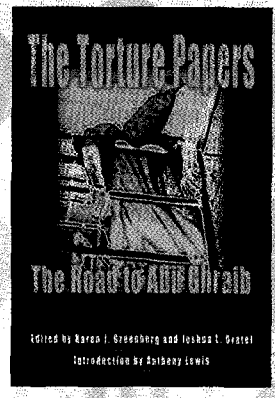

The Torture Papers consists of the memos and reports which US government officials wrote to prepare the way for and to legitimize coercive interrogation, including techniques many would label as torture, in Afghanistan, Guantanamo, and Abu Ghraib.

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ever fought. It claimed 80 percent of all German casualties in the war. The front stretched for 1,900 miles (the distance from the northern tip of Maine to the southern tip of Florida), and the seemingly unremitting military operations staged there were of unparalleled scale (the Battle of Kursk alone drew in 3.5 million men). Perhaps most significant, the Wehrmacht and the Red Army fought with singular viciousness and unprecedented efficiency: scholars now put the number of Soviet soldiers killed at a staggering 14.7 million, and the number of civilians killed at close to 20 million. And for its part, elements of the Red Army wreaked a most terrible revenge, raping at least two million women as the Russians invaded and occupied Germany. In short, the war in the east constitutes the single most terrible chapter in world military history—but it's a chapter that in many essential ways is only now being written. Since the publication, in 1975, of the final volume of John Erickson's magisterial history of "Stalin's War," scholarship on various aspects of the Red Army's military operations—much of it recondite, but necessary to fill in huge gaps in the historical record—has swollen. But the books that have received the most attention have probed the German army's conduct. Owing largely to self-serving accounts written by Wehrmacht generals after the war, the conventional wisdom long held that even here the regular German army was—as Shepherd, a young Scottish historian, characterizes that point of view—"an oasis of honor and decency amidst the barbaric apparatus of the Nazi state." But Omer Bartov's pathbreaking 1985 study, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*, demonstrated convincingly that in fact the Wehrmacht—not just the SS and other Nazi ideologues—had willingly, even enthusiastically, participated in the slaughter of Soviet civilians and the attempted extermination of the Jews. In his important examination of the Wehrmacht's war against Soviet partisans (among the most gruesome facets of the Russo-German conflict, in which neither side gave any quarter, and in which up to 300,000 Soviets, mostly civilians, were killed) Shepherd largely confirms Bartov's general conclusions but adds layers of nuance and shades of (dark) gray. Analyzing the official paperwork of three army security divisions responsible for the suppression of Soviet insurgents, Shepherd focuses on the conduct and motivation of field officers, who served as the crucial links that "converted the ideological, military, and economic imperatives of the Third Reich's war of extermination into action." He reveals that at all levels the Wehrmacht was thoroughly indoctrinated in Nazi anti-Bolshevik, anti-Slav, and anti-Semitic ideology, and that even prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union it was quite happily prepared to act with ruthlessness against Soviet civilians. Although the Wehrmacht planned its barbaric strategy for largely pragmatic reasons (given its small numbers relative to the size of the territory and the population it had to subdue, terror tactics seemed exigent), it also "colluded to the hilt in the mass murder of Jews and other groups by the SS." But Shepherd reveals that as partisan activity intensified, many officers (mostly from western Germany, and so largely immune from the anti-Slav sentiment that pervaded eastern Germany) calculatedly acted with some restraint and even attempted to cultivate ties with Soviet civilians in order to stanch support for the guerrillas and woo deserters—even as other Wehrmacht units, commanded by ideological fanatics (who tended to be from eastern Germany), continued and extended their arbitrary killing spree. Shepherd in no way exonerates the Wehrmacht. The conduct of all German officers he examines was ferocious, even criminal—though some were more brutal than pragmatic, and some more pragmatic than brutal. But in highlighting the diversity and fluidity of the Wehrmacht's response to the partisan threat, he illuminates both the mercurial nature of warfare and a particularly savage aspect of the most savage war yet waged.

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and national editor of The Atlantic.

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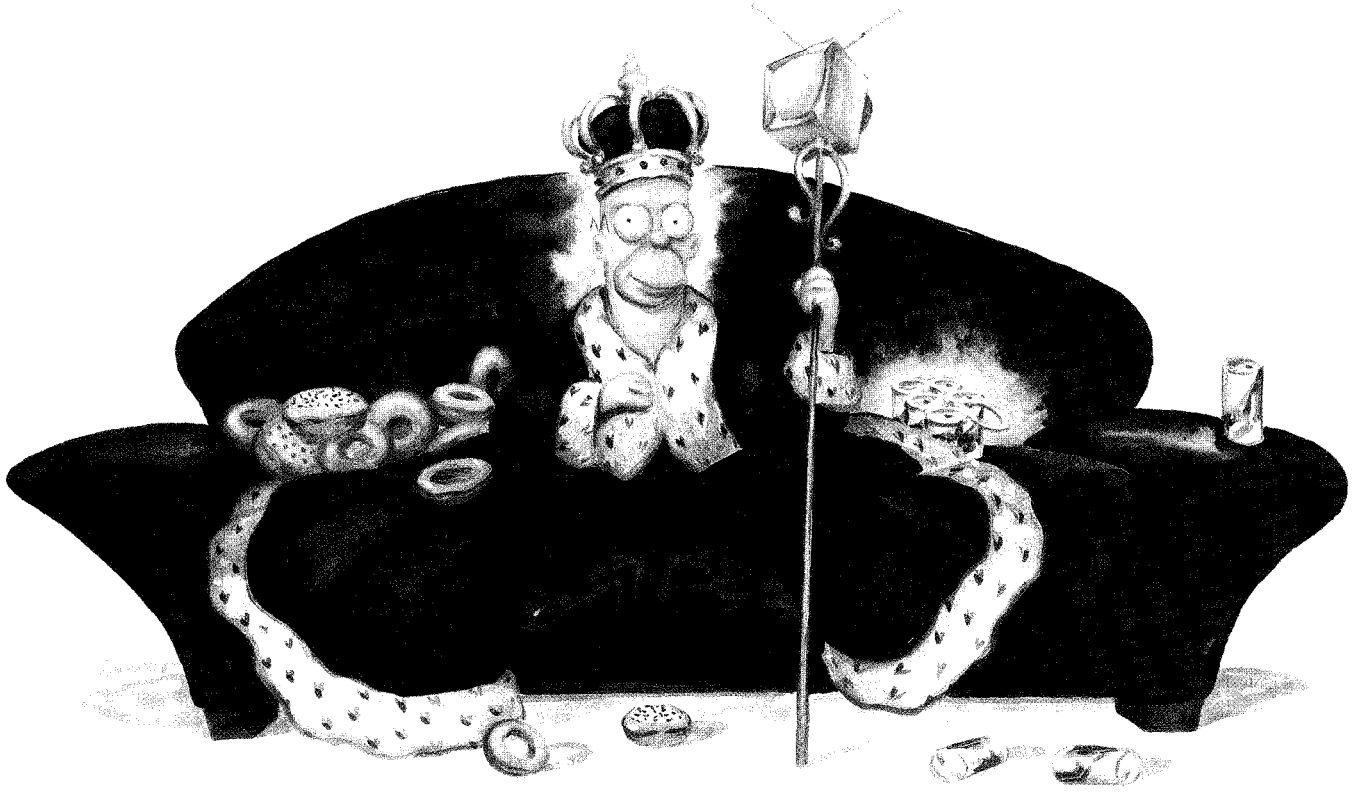

TIM BOWER

BOOKS

The Murdoch Touch

If Rupert's so bad, why is Fox so good?

BY TOM CARSON

When people today bemoan the rise of Fox, they mean cable's Fox News Channel—home of Sean Hannity's red-white-and-Colgate smirk, Bill O'Reilly strutting and fretting his hour upon the stage, and God's favorite banana Republican, Oliver North. That's why *The Fourth Network*, Daniel M. Kimmel's account of the original Fox's arrival in broadcast television's hen house, has its quaint side; given what followed, the book might as well be called *The First Tentacle*. It's almost touching to remember the simpler time when Rupert Murdoch was out to diddle only our tastes, not our political values.

THE FOURTH NETWORK: How Fox Broke the Rules and Reinvented Television
by Daniel M. Kimmel
Ivan R. Dee

He succeeded, too, and while one doesn't quite want to say "More power to him," the truth is that TV is the better for it. Television was puerile long before today's raft of uncommon lowest denominators, which so horrify our holdout nests of gentlefolk. The difference is that it used to be *unctuously* puerile, obstinately conceiving the mass audience as the monolith that the rest of pop culture kept proving it wasn't and promoting a middle-class consensus—innocuous, self-satisfied, and dull—that was an artifice long before it stopped being tenable. A crass alternative to the quasi-official triumvirate of CBS, NBC, and ABC (broadcasting's Big Three ever since the demise of the old Dumont network, way back in Eisenhower's first term), Fox, which was launched in 1986, augured the 500-channel surfeit of high-low antipodes and niche programming for multimillion-member coteries we cheerily surf through now.

Something like this would undoubtedly have happened even if the ship carrying Rupe's convict ancestors to Australia had foundered with all hands, a scenario let's try not to get too wistful about. But Fox, like no other network, defined TV's transformation in the nineties, not only by rejecting any pretense of civic-mindedness—always the Big Three's pious compensation for their medium's presumed vulgarity—but by braying that Fox programming wasn't for everybody. Pursuing traditional broadcasting's chimera of one-size-fits-all appeal wasn't something the fledgling network had the resources to do in any case. Instead Fox targeted the youth demographics that advertisers prized, all but inventing teen soaps with *Beverly Hills, 90210* and corralling a rare integrated audience of black and white hipsters with Keenen Ivory Wayans's sketch show, *In Living Color*, whose subcultural savvy made *Saturday Night Live* look like *Hee Haw*. It's because of Fox's redivision of the ratings pie that a later series like the WB's (and then UPN's) *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* could qualify as buzzworthy despite never coming close to cracking the Top Twenty in the Nielsen ratings. For that matter, without Fox's brash example, the WB and UPN might not exist—certainly not in the form they do: as also-rans that are nonetheless success stories.

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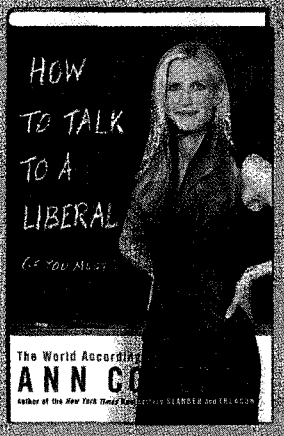

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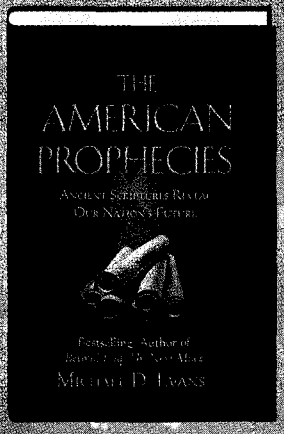

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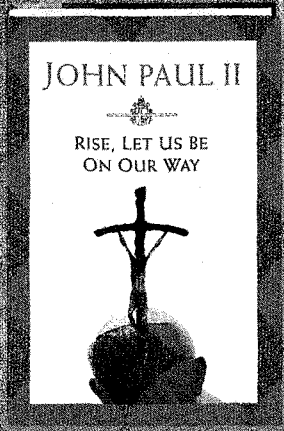

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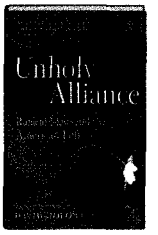

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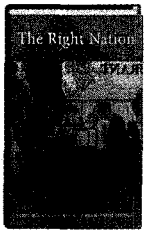

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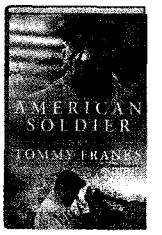

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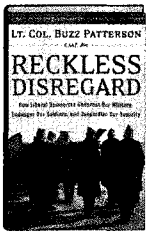

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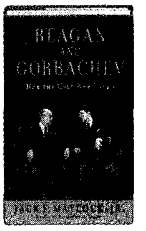

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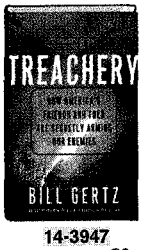

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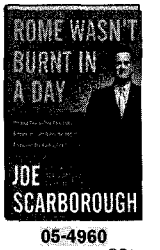

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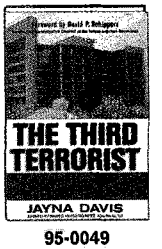

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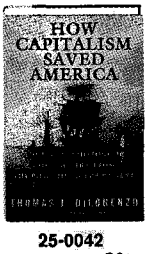

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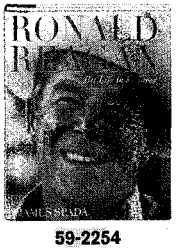

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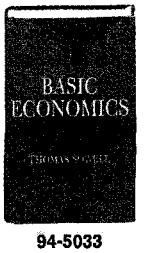

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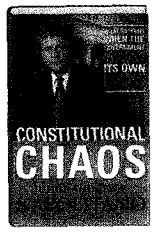

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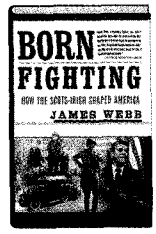

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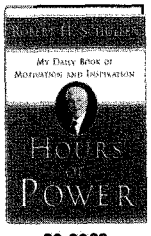

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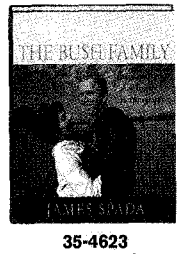

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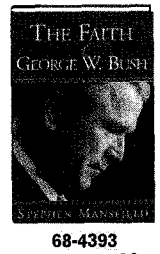

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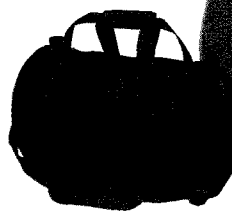

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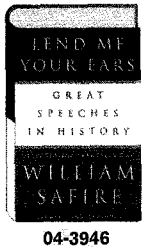

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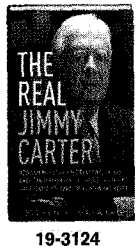

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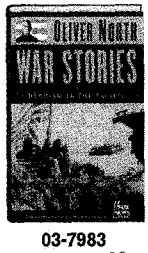

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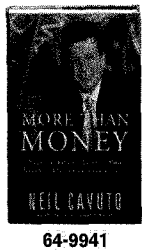

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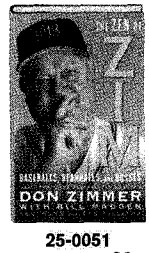

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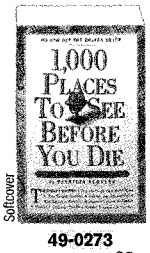

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As a straightforward recap of how Murdoch did it—from buying Metromedia and assembling a ragtag group of indie affiliates to dickering with Congress and an FCC so happy to lean backward for him that it was nicknamed the Fox Communications Commission—*The Fourth Network* is an informative read. Its limitation is that despite his sweeping subtitle, Kimmel is really interested only in the business side of the story, and in a fairly pedestrian way. Though he gingerly notes some of Murdoch's more unsavory practices, his tacit premise is boosterish—Fox as the Seabiscuit of media hydras—and critical analysis of the issues raised isn't his strong suit. Typically, when he describes the 1994 flap over then incoming Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's receiving a $4.5 million book advance from HarperCollins, a subsidiary of Murdoch's News Corp., while legislation of interest to Murdoch was pending (Gingrich passed up the payday once the clamor kicked in), he's ingenuous—or craven—enough to assume that simply because no quid pro quo was actually discussed when the two men met, none was implicit.

Because Kimmel isn't overly curious about the creative end—the book is all boardrooms and no sound stages—his year-by-year summary of Fox's track record has a cast of suits; and since for the most part they aren't characterized, nor the consequences of their decisions made to seem especially significant, their ups and downs stay uninvolving. The book's major frustration, though, is that the man who ought to be its central figure is so blandly interpreted—that is, not at all. Granted, Kimmel didn't have any access to Murdoch, but the Munchkins knew the Wicked Witch mostly by report, and that didn't stop them from gibbering.

It's not that I need *The Fourth Network* to confirm my belief—not exactly an uncommon one—that Murdoch is a creep. But its author might at least have been intrigued by the fact that—unlike, say, Donald Trump, whose motives are always as legible as Anna Nicole Smith's—Murdoch is a *baffling* creep: "the poster boy of the cultural contradictions of capitalism," as John Powers calls him in *Sore Winners*, "whose enterprises subvert the very institutions and values he claims to be conserving." Half the ideologue as cynic and half the cynic as ideologue, and alarming either way, Murdoch serenely backed not only *The Simpsons*, whose seditious streak has softened but not vanished with age, but also *Profit* and *Skin*, two regrettably short-lived shows that treated capitalism as a disease—one by assuming that the ideal tycoon was a psychopath, and the other by sardonically equating big business with the porn industry. Ted Turner, on the other hand, was so straightforward a liberal that he even married Jane Fonda, and the nightmarish thing is that it was probably for the conversation.

What's unnerving is that Murdoch may be right to suspect, as he undoubtedly does, that these contradictions don't matter. From the start Fox's reputation—one the network, fearful of prestige, embraces to this day—wasn't for agitprop but for appalling low-mindedness, certified by its debut sitcom, the brilliantly foul *Married ... With Children*. Kimmel tells us that the working title for this no-holds-barred burlesque of Middle American squalor was *Not the Cosbys*, which certainly takes you back to what eighties TV was like before Fox's advent. *The Cosby Show* was the last of consensus-style TV's great hits; its expert craft, unimpeachable virtue, and literal paternalism were the sitcom equivalent of Walter Cronkite's trustworthiness or Johnny Carson's barometric genius. (That Cronkite has no heir is one proof that consensus TV is as dead as the dodo; that David Letterman and Jay Leno now split the legacy of sardonic Johnny and gee-whiz Johnny between them is another.) However, the real anti-*Cosby* turned out to be a bizarre-looking cartoon spun off from an animated segment on Fox's *The Tracey Ullman Show*. It was soon going head-to-head with the Cos on Thursday nights, an act of chutzpah so widely viewed as foolhardy that Goliath himself—through a spokesman, natch—professed amazement.

Fox's *Joe Millionaire* was a hunk of ridiculous trash so eloquent about our attitudes toward sex, class, money, and fairy-tale romance that Edith Wharton would have been fascinated.

By now *The Simpsons* towers over *Cosby* as a cultural landmark; how many viewers are even aware that Springfield's chuckling, callous resident physician started out as a pointed Cliff Huxtable send-up? But it may indicate just how fed up we TV-land heretics had gotten with Cosby's heartily authoritarian bromides that when Matt Groening's motley two-dimensional crew finally edged out Bill's nonmusical Von Trapp family in the ratings, I compared the event in print to the world's turning upside down at Yorktown. Nothing measures how profoundly things have changed like the fact that *The Simpsons*—now generally, and rightly, acclaimed by critics as one of television's most humane treasures—was greeted half a generation ago as proof that TV had rolled into the gutter for good. When George H.W. Bush joined the fray ("We need a nation closer to *The Waltons* than *The Simpsons*," he said, probably without ever having watched either), he set up one of the great moments in TV history: Bart Simpson sassing the president of the United States right back.

It's a safe guess that Murdoch, Republican backer or no, wouldn't have cared if Bart had advocated assassinating Poppy, so long as it built the brand. Quality control was never part of any Fox executive's brief, and the network churned out more than its share of forgettable dreck. But memorable dreck and better—dreck that pegged a suddenly up-for-grabs zeitgeist by inventing new audiences—was Fox's real contribution, which was why its nineties roster of must-see TV surpassed not only NBC's but that of the Big Three put together: from *Married ... With Children* and that delirious index of Clinton-era frolics *Melrose Place* to the ahead-of-John-

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Ashcroft's-time *Alien Nation* and *The X-Files*, progenitor of a whole fantasy-conspiracy genre that, post-9/11, carries on in ABC's *Alias* and Fox's own *24*. Not to mention *Ally McBeal*, which I couldn't stand but which made the cover of *Time* for good reason, and the current *The O.C.*, which I dote on; it's dreck so wittily attuned to contemporary mores that to label it dreck at all is simply to specify its genre, not to pass judgment.

In animation, where Fox ruled despite its competitors' attempts to play catch-up (who remembers ABC's *Capitol Critters*, produced by that barrel of laughs Steven Bochco?), the success of *The Simpsons* spawned not only Groening's charming *Futurama* but also *Beavis and Butt-head* creator Mike Judge's *King of the Hill*, which was both celebrating and satirizing George W. Bush's America well before Dubya reached office. In the comedy realm, as the supposedly more mainstream networks grew increasingly dependent on high-end shows about bantering yuppie singles—the Big Three's version of boutique programming—Fox became, peculiarly enough, prime time's most reliable purveyor of homely, old-fashioned family sitcoms (*That '70s Show*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Grounded for Life*, and a personal favorite, *Titus*), whose new wrinkles made them funkier and more truthful about kids and parents than their antiseptic predecessors.

All in all, this is such an impressive list of lively, trend-setting, even radical programming—imagine the past fifteen years of prime time without it—that you may wonder how Fox has managed to preserve its air of disreputability. But not to worry: Murdoch is Murdoch, after all. Far more notoriously, but still building the brand, his network also pioneered tabloid TV with *America's Most Wanted* and *Cops*, not to mention such exercises in raw titillation as *World's Scariest Police Chases* and the legendary *When Animals Attack*—another alternative title for *The Fourth Network* that Kimmel missed out on. Although it was left to CBS, in yet another sign of changing times, to inaugurate the reality-TV vogue with *Survivor*, Fox quickly upped the ante, concocting stunt shows so garishly depraved that in hindsight the

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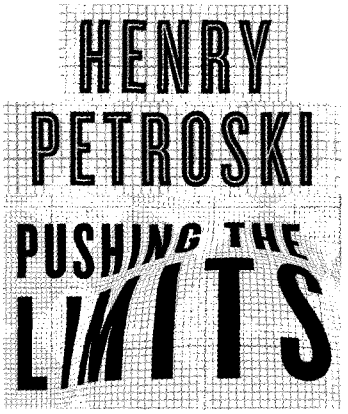

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first of them, *Temptation Island*, now looks downright sedate.

Yet Fox is also responsible for at least two of the best reality shows. That's an oxymoron only if you don't grasp why reality TV became a phenomenon in the first place: it's expressive, which is what pop culture is supposed to be. Calling Fox's *Joe Millionaire* a hunk of ridiculous trash may be perfectly apt, but it's also unilluminating; *Millionaire* was ridiculous trash so eloquent about our attitudes toward sex, class, money, and fairy-tale romance that Edith Wharton would have been fascinated. There also isn't another series as revealing about the quiddities of race (and fame, and good old anti-intellectual American chauvinism—thanks for the target practice, Simon Cowell) as *American Idol*, whose participatory hook is at once cultural democracy writ large and a diverting parodic displacement of the electoral process whose literal version so many Americans are estranged from.

In fact, reality programming is the ultimate symbol of the democratization—the cultural deregulation, if you like—of TV, substituting a carnival of pluribus for traditional broadcasting's premium on unum. Call it pandering and you won't be wrong, but to the formerly marginalized audiences in question, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* addicts no less than fans of Jeff Foxworthy's (great name) *Blue Collar TV*, pandering feels like enfranchisement. To suppose that this is somehow more objectionable than *Seinfeld*'s catering to yuppie narcissism is simply to assert your belief that biscotti and mime beat bread and circuses—that is, that some coteries should be more equal than others. (Distaste on aesthetic grounds is, of course, another story—but because pop culture is about audiences as much as artifacts, it's never the *whole* story.) Gentility as a mode will never lack devotees; just ask Merchant and Ivory. But gentility as an imposed ideal has been the bane of democratic culture's vitality ever since mass communications were invented.

The paradox—or is it one, sublimation spotters?—is that TV's content is becoming more democratic just as our economic and political institutions are growing less so. Murdoch's empire exemplifies the perniciousness of unfettered media consolidation every bit as much as Fox's programming does the pleasures of cultural deregulation—a conundrum that Kimmel doesn't have the analytical chops to explore. Yet the reason pop culture has always been the joker in capitalism's deck is that its manufacturers have never been able to control what audiences make of the product. That's why it was an overlooked TV milestone when *Married ... With Children*'s sorry Al Bundy, intended as a grotesque figure of fun, became a beloved folk hero instead—grotty suburbia's answer to the good soldier Schweik.

His current epigone, of course, is Bill O'Reilly, who's baleful rather than abject—and whose surly vox-pop shtick is as much a performance as actor Ed O'Neill's was. But I didn't believe that Bart Simpson represented civilization's downfall, and I don't think Fox News does either, in spite of loathing both its politics and its mountebank methodology. For one thing, in a splendid illustration of the rule of unintended consequences, the channel's propagandistic overreaching turned out to be a wake-up call for its ideological opponents. For another, no matter how much they enjoy getting their world views buttressed right up to the fundament, Fox News viewers don't have bad taste in show biz. Especially when O'Reilly is on, they're responding to brilliant TV, and if you ever rolled your eyes at Walter Cronkite's plummy version of papal infallibility, you can appreciate why O'Reilly's barroom contempt for traditional newscasts' smugness has its appeal, even if you know his pretense that their bias is flamingly liberal, rather than blandly institutional, is a crock. O'Reilly's double game is that he's an iconoclast who sucks up to power, which is also true of Fox News in general. But that's offset by the fact that a contentious network can't, by definition, be an authoritative one—not least because, as we've seen, it instantly spawns hecklers of its own. In some ways the ultimate question posed by Fox News, Murdoch's career, and television's current fertile disarray is whether charlatanry is an improvement on humbug.

Tom Carson is a contributing editor of The Atlantic *and the author of* Gilligan's Wake *(2003), a novel.*

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BOOKS

Darling Me

Christopher Isherwood followed Oscar Wilde's prescription for lifelong romance by falling in love with himself—over and over again

BY THOMAS MALLON

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Winsome and boyish (preternaturally and studiously so), Christopher Isherwood always appeared to be the youngest of Britain's young writers of the thirties, those clever, slippery wünderkinder of a "low dishonest decade," as their chieftain, W. H. Auden, put it even better than he knew. In fact Isherwood was older than Auden and Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice. Last year he reached his posthumous centenary.

What's more, as Peter Parker's elephantine but finally energetic new biography reminds us, Isherwood was the most aristocratic of the bunch, destined from birth to inherit Marple Hall, a huge Elizabethan house on the border of Cheshire and Derbyshire. The place would be near ruin by the time it came his way, in midlife, but he was still glad to turn it over to his addled younger brother—the sort of renunciatory gesture Isherwood had been making toward hierarchical, heterosexual England ever since public school.

His precocity and dandyism were established well before the loss of his father, Frank, in the Battle of Ypres, when Christopher was eleven. It seems unlikely, even without Frank's early death, that his firstborn would have turned out any less willfully feckless than he did, leaving Cambridge with no degree and finding less interest in medical school than in tutoring young boys. The most important psychological fact of Isherwood's early life was the overeager embrace of widowhood by his mother, Kathleen, who became in her son's mind a monster of nostalgia, a ruffled, squawking martyr suspended in an amber of Edwardian pride and prejudices. "Just think of her!" Isherwood cried out from Cambridge. "Sitting in front of a fire in Kensington, warming her cunt!" She would live well into her son's middle age, indulging his rebellions to a degree he couldn't see despite his nasty, persistent fixation on her.

Kathleen shows up, unpleasantly, in Isherwood's earliest novels, *All the Conspirators* and *The Memorial*, and she remains with him toward the end, in the memoir *Kathleen and Frank*, where—with customary reference to himself in the third person—he finally acknowledges her usefulness as the "counterforce which gave him strength ... [what] saved him from becoming a mother's boy, a churchgoer, an academic, a conservative, a patriot and a respectable citizen."

ISHERWOOD: A LIFE REVEALED
by Peter Parker
Random House

Kathleen was the most otherly of what Isherwood always called the Others, those Blimps and boors he felt nipping at his heels. (Never mind that he inherited several parts of their mindset, including anti-Semitism.) Parker seems sympathetic to Kathleen in exactly the right measure; however admirable Isherwood's literary and sexual rebellions, the biographer knows when to get fed up with his subject. Once Isherwood starts exalting his myriad gay romances over the "evil old sentimental lie" of family ties, Parker declares his "remark about his hundred brothers and thousand sons, with its unfortunate echo of *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*," to be "quite as much of a sentimental lie as any notions about blood relationships."

Isherwood's sexual bravery was generally uncompromising and entirely adult, but his actual desires had an aspect

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of perennial adolescence. He derived his most reliable erotic pleasure from wrestling, usually commencing sex "in mock-innocence as a fight." (Parker leaves no doubt that Isherwood came out of these encounters on top.) The novelist found his lasting type at Repton School, when he was assigned a pint-size fag named, believe it or not, Austen Darling. He developed a consuming crush on the child actor Jackie Coogan, the movies' delicate Oliver Twist, and forever sought to be the protective older brother of his partners.

"Berlin meant Boys," Isherwood reminisced, with a delighted new impunity, in his 1976 memoir, *Christopher and His Kind*. The only remotely competitive motivation for the first of his many trips to Germany, in March of 1929, was a chance to spite Kathleen, widowed as she'd been by the Hun. When abroad, Isherwood settled into a routine of writing by day and cruising the bars of Berlin's east end by night. He wrestled, and bankrolled, a series of obliging youths from the working class, blending commerce and sentiment as potently as Hallmark or Disney ever would. He liked to idealize whatever tacit or explicit bargain underlay his relationships with Bubi and Walter (eventually Otto in "The Nowaks") and finally Heinz, with whom the writer exchanged rings and went on the run once Hitler clamped down and the German draft law threatened to scoop the boy into the army or prison.

Isherwood toyed with the idea of getting Kathleen to adopt Heinz, and tried, through the raffish adventurer Gerald Hamilton, to buy the papers of a new nationality for him. "Isherwood could, if provoked, come up with all manner of moral arguments for sticking by Heinz," Parker writes, "but a major reason for his loyalty was that it gave him the opportunity to defy the Others"—as they were represented by both petty officialdom and the first revvings of the Nazi killing machine.

Even so, Parker is right to label his subject "the least political member of his particular generation." (Hitler, the biographer convinces us, could never hold a candle to Kathleen in Isherwood's demonology.) The novelist might explain, with a certain regret, to his lifelong Communist friend Edward Upward that the personal would always trump the political in him ("I have made a mess of my leftism"), but Parker, a believer in each according to his means, values the remorseless detachment of Isherwood's Berlin short stories more highly than anything false ideological piety might have produced. Even Isherwood's deadpan depictions of Nazi violence had a defensible artistic integrity, Parker argues: "This was after all a city in which appalling things were shrugged off or regarded as a price worth paying for the improvements political change would supposedly bring."

Isherwood's credo, or confession, of objectivity found its most famous expression in the sentence "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking." The detachment seemed to include his references to himself as "Christopher Isherwood" or, in the speech of his German landlady, "Herr Issyvoo." But self-portraiture by Isherwood's camera actually involved a lot of soft light and flattering refraction, and his friend Spender warned him against the airbrushed results: "I can't help protesting against the little comic-cuts Charlie Chaplin figure into which you are getting so adept at turning yourself ... You are far more interesting, and rather more sinister in some ways, than you make out." In a 1938 diary Isherwood recognized himself as less a personality than "a chemical compound" whose "'character' is simply a repertoire of acquired tricks [and] conversation a repertoire of adaptations and echoes." He would urge those opening his memoir *Lions and Shadows* to read it like a novel, and eventually admitted to having used the persona "Christopher Isherwood" so often and so elastically that it began to confuse even him.

It is difficult to say whether all these permutations represented some new height of egocentricity or an attempt at self-annihilation. The author's relationship to his other real-life-based characters seems to have been equally curious. Parker surmises that Isherwood saw both his lovers and his dramatis personae "principally in relation

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to himself, rather than [as] autonomous beings." He took unusual pains to get the originals to sign off on their imaginary isotopes, seeking the approval of Jean Ross (Sally Bowles), Gerald Hamilton (Mr. Norris), and Lincoln Kirstein (Charles Kennedy in *The World in the Evening*) before releasing them into print. The effort went well beyond legal caution, as if the subjects' failure to acknowledge and sanction the portraits might make Isherwood doubt the actuality of his sitters.

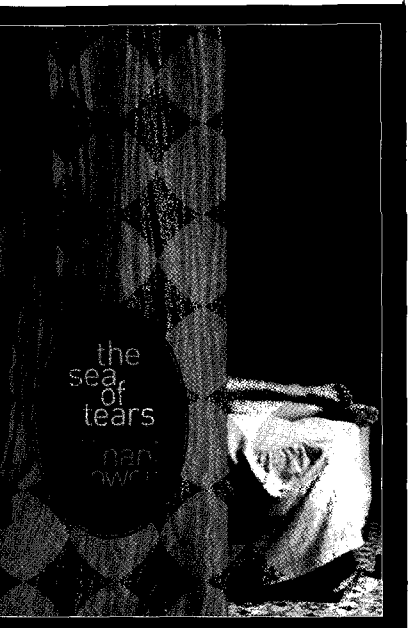
Only Auden, the novelist believed, understood the real nature of Christopher Isherwood without the quotation marks. Friends since their time together at St. Edmund's School, in the last days of the Great War, the two enjoyed—it seems exactly the right word—an intermittent twelve-year sexual relationship. Isherwood repaid Auden's insights into his character with shrewd, proprietary critiques of Auden's verse. The two collaborated on a series of verse dramas (*The Ascent of F6*) for the Group Theatre of the 1930s, and on *Journey to a War*, an account of their travels through China as it fought off Japan. Their sometimes antic tale of air raids and outrageous outfits earned a scolding from the *Daily Worker*.

This was nothing, however, compared with the contempt excited by their departure for America in January of 1939, a few months after Munich. During the late 1930s Isherwood's life had been held, like most Europeans', in a dangerous diplomatic abeyance (Hitler, he wrote, "is now the Bank manager to all friends, all lovers"), and after drifting from one affair to the next—with a boyfriend of Spender's; a former pupil of his own; a chorus boy of Guy Burgess's—Isherwood caught sight of America as a shiny escape from England's doom. The British papers sneered; Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* regretted; an MP raised a question in the House of Commons; and Evelyn Waugh plunked Auden and Isherwood, as Parsnip and Pimpernell, into *Put Out More Flags*. Isherwood tried dressing up his desertion in a lot of Forsterian finery (is it *really* braver to betray one's country than one's friend?), but he eventually admitted the irresponsibility of his having left.

Still, he had to say that "all turned out for the best." In the years to come his diary would more often refer to the British as "they" than "we"—the Others at last having become just that. To paint the American lily, he settled in California instead of New York, taking out citizenship and taking up yoga. His involvement with Eastern religion, in the form of Vedanta, resulted not so much in the attainment of a higher life as the achievement of a parallel one. His friend the playwright Dodie Smith, like many of Isherwood's readers then and now, could not quite understand his "craving for *discipline*," as she declared to her diary. "He seems to want to force himself beyond his own inclinations." Actually, the novelist's swami, Prabhavananda, was so reluctant to lose his celebrity disciple that Isherwood was permitted to leap off the various wagons of abstinence whenever he wanted. By 1948 Isherwood estimated that he'd had 400 sexual partners, and throughout the years of Vedanta he continued to make time with young men about as often as he "made japam," the meditative recitation of his customized mantra.

All this took a lot of energy, as did occasional scriptwriting, teaching, and —at the swami's behest—a biography of Ramkrishna. Novels didn't come thick and fast, but a large portion of edgy domestic contentment arrived once Isherwood took up with the artist Don Bachardy, thirty years his junior and a college student when they met, in 1952. (Bachardy looked so much younger still that even Isherwood's friend Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist who pioneered tolerance toward homosexuality, felt scandalized.) The relationship endured, despite spats and sulks and many other lovers for each of them, until Isherwood's death, in 1986. "With love there *ought* to be a need to worry, every moment," Isherwood said in his later years. "Love isn't an insurance policy. Love is tension."

He did of course have a character, however often he blurred it in fiction, and the elements from which it cohered are given vivid if delayed expression by Parker's huge book. Strong-willed to the point of petulance, inclined to psychic vibes and ghostly "apparitions," Isher-



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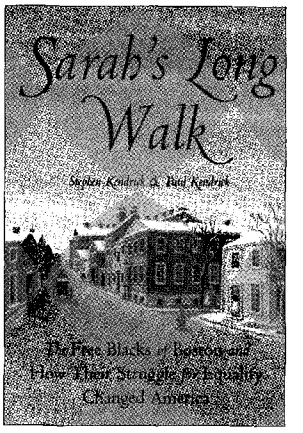
wood was above all a tough little narcissist who seems to have profited from Oscar Wilde's prescription for lifelong romance by falling in love with himself—over and over again. The "kind" in his by now famously titled *Christopher and His Kind* can be read as standing not merely for homosexuals but for homosexuals rather like Christopher. A number of the writer's lovers, Parker says, "would strike Isherwood as just like himself at an earlier age." If Vedanta presented a radical means for unburdening himself of "that old harp, the Ego, darling Me," Isherwood was at bottom frightened of letting all that go.

It's hard to argue in favor of the scale of this book, and hard not to accuse Parker of falling into the biographer's version of the imitative fallacy, by which a lived life seems best replicated in being laid out day by day. The book gets off to an excruciatingly slow start, with inventory substituting for description, and detail for meaning. Every time the reader begins to walk across an apparent narrative fairway, some minor character's CV is there to spring up like a rake handle and thump him on the forehead.

But in a strange defiance of literary physics the enterprise gains pace and pith as it goes along. Like his comic-book namesake, Peter Parker eventually manages to take off his geeky glasses and boldly leap—a life-writing Spider-Man at last!—toward acute inference and surprising judgments. Once Isherwood is in California, the book begins to approximate Parker's insightful (and leaner) 1989 biography of the editor and memoirist J. R. Ackerley. Indeed, Isherwood's Ackerley-like forthrightness about homosexuality—his early courage in refusing to see himself as criminal or crazy—will probably be the lasting basis of his reputation. The film version of *Cabaret*, derived from his Berlin material, may have brought Isherwood a new readership in the 1970s, but his willingness to serve as what Parker calls "the homosexual movement's favorite uncle" ensured his enshrinement in at least one pantheon, albeit a political rather than a literary one.

"Truly outstanding."

—James Brewer Stewart, author of *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*



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He earned his place in it by producing assertively gay books well before *Christopher and His Kind*, during the 1950s and 1960s. The happy endings (as opposed to the usual punishments and miseries) he insisted on meting out to his gay characters in *The World in the Evening* (1954) no doubt contributed to that book's bad reviews—as did, by Parker's estimation, its "startlingly dud writing." But ten years later Isherwood tried again, with *A Single Man*, the unsparing, pissed-off tale of one day in the life of a fifty-eight-year-old gay man named George. Parker does not overestimate this novel when he calls it "Isherwood's most profound and most skillfully written book." Gone was all the crafty preening of earlier Isherwood personae; every card was face up, and the only apologies forthcoming would spring, thank you, from the shamed straight reader.

Presented with a new era's opportunities for candor, Isherwood did not let them go to waste. He had had an object lesson on this score from E. M. Forster, who had shown him the manuscript of *Maurice*, the older writer's self-suppressed gay novel, as far back as 1933. In the early 1950s Isherwood would suggest changes and the addition of a chapter to the still-hidden book, and two decades after that, in 1971, following Forster's death, he would finally supervise the novel's publication.

A David Hockney painting of Isherwood and Bachardy has achieved "an almost iconic status in the gay world," according to Parker, who nonetheless finds the picture "more subtle and ambiguous" than some interested parties are likely to. He's on to something here, and although the only thing worse than speaking ill of the dead is speaking *for* them, the portrait inevitably makes one guess at what Isherwood might add these days to our debate over gay marriage. One supposes that he'd be all for its legalization, but one wonders, too, whether this rebel wouldn't also be more than a little skeptical of our kind's headlong rush to the altar, which lies straight down the aisle in the church of the Others.

Thomas Mallon is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. *His most recent novels are* Two Moons *and* Bandbox.

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BOOKS

A Nice Bloody Fool

The vaguely preposterous Stephen Spender spent a great deal more of his life "being a poet" than he ever did writing poetry. And yet beneath the surface he had a pith of seriousness and principle

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

One of the early poems with which Stephen Spender made his name opens like this: "My parents kept me from children who were rough."

In 1957, in *The Sense of Movement*, Thom Gunn proclaimed: "I praise the overdogs from Alexander / To those who would not play with Stephen Spender."

Not long afterward two distinguished Englishmen of letters decided that "Stephen" had earned his very own limerick, and wrote,

> Then up spake the bold Stephen Spender
> "You may think my *conscience* is tender.
> You might think my *heart*
> Was my sensitive part—
> But you should see my poor old *pudenda*."

In a long life Spender never quite succeeded in overcoming the widespread impression (which he may have privately shared) that there was something vaguely preposterous about him. His official biographer, John Sutherland, perhaps unwittingly and certainly unwillingly, provides armfuls of ammunition for this view. He does not cite either of the cracks I have just mentioned, but he does give the passage below, taken from Spender's memoir *World Within World*. In 1930 T. S. Eliot had decided to publish four of the young man's poems in the *Criterion*, and furthermore invited him to lunch.

> At our first luncheon he asked me what I wanted to do. I said: "Be a poet." "I can understand you wanting to write poems, but I don't quite know what you mean by 'being a poet,'" he objected.

I think this is quite funny on its own, but additionally so because it inverts what ought to be the proper Jamesian scenario—the stuffy English don admonishing the brash young American student. Be that as it may, Stephen Spender was to pass a great deal more of his life "being a poet" than he ever did writing poetry.

The thought lay about him in his infancy (which was marked by an awful father, a frightful elder brother, and a hideous torment of a boarding school education—so far, "on track" for English writing). At the age of nine he went to the Lake District on a family holiday and was exposed to "the simple ballad poems of Wordsworth," which, as he further phrased it, "dropped into my mind like cool pebbles, so shining and so pure, and they brought with them the atmosphere of rain and sunsets, and a sense of the sacred cloaked vocation of the poet." He was already, in other words, what Byron witheringly called "a Laker." An early school poem sustains the same note of moist wonderment about the weather, yearning for the spring in Devonshire but opening, "The rain drops from the mist endless and slow / The trees are bare and black . . ."

This culminates in the line "O God! . . . would I were there." Sutherland misses a trick, I think, in failing to point out the obvious debt to Rupert Brooke and his *Grantchester*, inspiration of drooping and sensitive versifiers at that time and since. (Ten years later Geoffrey Grigson was dryly to say, in reviewing Spender's book *The Destructive Element*, "Stephen Spender is the Rupert Brooke of the Depression.")

HERBERT LIST/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Indeed, it was above all the sense of an epoch, and of a decade, that allowed Spender to get away with "being a poet." Crucial to this image were his friendships from Oxford days with W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood, and Cecil Day-Lewis. This cabal provoked Roy Campbell's joke about the "MacSpaunday" school:

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a joke that was a source of embarrassment (and rage, given Campbell's open sympathy for fascism) while simultaneously furnishing a near guarantee of immortality.

Among this book's assembly of sometimes very striking unpublished photographs is a shot of Spender, Auden, and Isherwood on the beach at Fire Island in 1947. Spender stands commandingly erect in the center, with his arms around the shoulders of his two much shorter comrades. There would be no doubt in the mind of the untutored as to which of them was the senior (the photo is presumably from Spender's private trove). And yet, as Sutherland shows very skillfully, it was Auden who was the literary boss from the beginning, and Isherwood (sometimes with Auden, and sometimes without) who was the sexually tougher and more resourceful one. Auden demonstrated his mastery from the very first, demanding to know of Spender how often he wrote poetry.

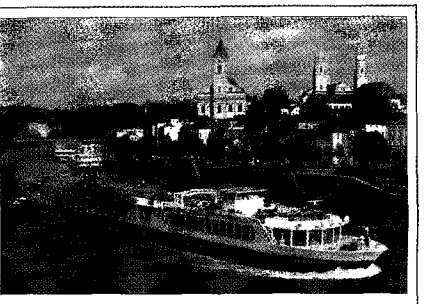
> Without reflecting, I replied that I wrote about four poems a day. He was astonished and exclaimed: "What energy!" I asked him how often he wrote a poem. He replied: "I write about one in three weeks." After this I started writing only one poem in three weeks.

So silly. Up until then, of course, Spender had been so impressed at attending the same Oxford college as Shelley that he had felt compelled to adopt yet another poetic pose: that of the agonized and alienated young dreamer.

Anyone who has seen *Cabaret* can read several of the succeeding chapters at speed. The three men pursued boys of various sorts and conditions (usually proletarian) all over Berlin and over much of Germany and Austria as well. (Auden ended up with a painful rectal fissure, which led him to write his wince-makingly titled *Letter to a Wound*.) They seem to have done most of it on borrowed money or on tiny publishing advances. Orwell's vicious remark, about the "nancy poets" who spent on sodomy what they had gained by sponging, was barely a match for the amazing narcissism revealed in these pages. However (and as Orwell was later to ruefully admit), there was a core of principle involved. Spender could feel fascism coming on, and was appalled by the premonitory symptoms of it. He may have made a complete fool of himself by going briefly to Spain. (The leader of the British Communist Party, the cynical Harry Pollitt, probably did say that he thought Spender's only usefulness would be to die the death of a Byronic martyr: another potential poetic "character" for him to have adopted, had he been less prudent than he was.) Spender may have written a fatuous book titled *Forward From Liberalism*, which among other things defended Stalin's show trials. But beneath all this playacting and conceit and gullibility was a pith of seriousness.

We can reconstruct this, not from *Goodbye to Berlin* but from the words of Isaiah. Dr. Berlin, whatever his many drawbacks, was an excellent judge of character. What he saw in Spender was an open-faced, vulnerable, rather captivating readiness to take chances. Most bullied English public school boys with oppressive fathers would soon have learned how to wear a protective carapace of some sort; Spender remained a naif in the best sense of that term, even as he remained something of an adolescent in matters of the pudendum. (The reason I don't name the authors of the above limerick, written by contemporaries of his, is that even now they regard it as accurate but unkind.)

The hinge moment, if I read Sutherland correctly, came with the outbreak of the Second World War. Spender had become an admirer of America, but it would not have occurred to him to take ship and leave England at that moment, as Auden and Isherwood both famously did. In the course of an earlier quarrel Spender had exclaimed to Isherwood, "If we're going to part, at least let's part like men." Isherwood had won that round, replying bitchily, "But Stephen, we *aren't* men." In some fashion or manner brittleness of that sort was to become *de trop* after Dunkirk. Spender "stayed on," tried to enlist and was rejected on health grounds (which ranged from tapeworm



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Antipodean Alps, where plates collide: Mount Cook in New Zealand

A volcanic coastline fretted by erosion: the Na Pali cliffs on Kaua'i, Hawai'i

Aerial photograph showing the trace of the San Andreas Fault

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Richard Fortey,
a fascinating geological exploration of the earth's distant history

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to varicose veins), joined the London Fire Brigade (not a soft option at that time), and also became a husband and father. Sutherland rightly doesn't speculate about this, but there appears to me to have been a latent connection between the advent of war and the triumph of Spender's heterosexual side. His disastrous earlier, "open" marriage, to the bohemian hell-minx Inez Pearn, had been a failure partly because of his reluctance to break things off with his lover Tony Hyndman, here depicted as sponger and sodomite on a majestic scale. By falling for Natasha Litvin, a gifted musician and a considerable beauty, Spender found himself not only able to hold on to a serious woman for the first time but also—and perhaps not without its own significance that year—to confirm and affirm the slightly suppressed Jewish element in his family background. (His mother, Violet Schuster, was from a long line of converted and assimilated English Jews originating in Frankfurt.)

STEPHEN SPENDER: THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY
by John Sutherland
Viking/Penguin

The war also improved his poetry. In the thirties Spender had had to contend with the criticism—obviously wounding to an aspiring writer and poet—that he didn't write very well at all. Eliot noticed it. Auden noticed it. Cyril Connolly noticed it. To Connolly, Spender wrote in that disarming manner that Isaiah Berlin so adored, "You are quite right about the bad writing. I am very sorry. It disturbs me very much." Hilarious. Even his most famous poem, "I Think Continually of Those Who Were Truly Great," with its closing line, "And left the vivid air signed with their honor," had to be retouched by Isherwood before it "sang." Spender's readers often had to put up with things like "Hampstead Autumn" (1932), yet another rumination on the seasons: "In the fat autumn evening street / Hands from my childhood stretch out / And ring muffin bells."

Possibly ... But in 1943 he published *Exercises/Explorations*, the third "exercise" of which read,

> Since we are what we are, what
> shall we be
> But what we are? We are, we have
> Six feet and seventy years, to see
> The light, and then release it for the
> grave.
> We are not worlds, no, nor infinity,
> We have no claims on stone, except
> to prove
> In the invention of the city
> Our hearts, our intellect, our love.

This is very fine, and Sutherland is not stretching too far in comparing it, with its "mortuary sonorousness," to Donne's "Holy Sonnets."

Spender was more than six feet tall and lived on to be well over seventy. He easily outlived all his more famous contemporaries, and became in a sense their living witness as well as their official obituarist. I heard him give a rather beautiful address at Auden's memorial in Oxford in the fall of 1973. His long, spare frame and his nimbus of white hair had by then become familiar at dozens of international conferences and seminars. Sutherland speaks of him as a pioneer version of what we now call "the public intellectual." But Noël Annan went a bit further in terming him a "cultural statesman": a concept with a trapdoor of absurdity built right into it. This trapdoor was soon to fall open with a dismaying bang.

Having stayed in wartime England while keeping lines open to America, Spender was ideally positioned after 1945 to become a figure in the Anglo-U.S. "special relationship" and in one of its aspects, the cultural Cold War. The flagship symbol of both was the magazine *Encounter*, published in London but financed from across the Atlantic. Spender was a distinguished member of the team of anti-communist liberals (Isaiah Berlin, Richard Wollheim) and not-so-liberals (Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky) who characterized the magazine. His wife, Natasha, came up with the name.

Square miles of print have now been devoted to the scandal that occurred in the late 1960s when Conor Cruise O'Brien flatly accused *Encounter* of being a self- or at least semi-conscious organ of the Central Intelligence Agency. That it had long been receiving a thick-envelope CIA subvention was quickly established. But who among the editors had known all along? Lasky certainly had, and Ber-

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lin (in my opinion) equally certainly. Spender staked, and nearly lost, his reputation on the stubborn assertion that he had had absolutely *no idea*. It will be quickly seen that he was making it certain that he would look a fool. The English subdivide this title into categories, starting with plain fool, moving through damn fool to bloody fool, and ending with fucking fool—for which one has to be sinister as well as silly. By throwing wine over William Empson for even suggesting anything covert about *Encounter*'s finances, Spender qualified as at least a bloody fool. But a nice kind of fool for all that: the sort who could write, as he had in Germany many years before, "On the whole though I've decided that the best thing is to stick through thick and thin to the best one can find in one's fellow creatures, even though one is humiliated by having one's weakness and lack of pride exposed by one's dependence on them."

In the end, after dodging much collapsing scenery at *Encounter*, Spender announced that one was frightfully hurt to find that one's colleagues had been deceiving one. I don't doubt that this was largely genuine. But Sutherland provides a detail that was hitherto unknown to me. It seems that Spender had been unable to recruit the support of T. S. Eliot for the enterprise. The conservative sage of Faber had from the first been "chronically suspicious of the 'American auspices' of the magazine." Well then, how could Spender really maintain that the thought had never even occurred to him?

He managed, with that providence that sometimes protects the terminally innocent, to escape into a third act of his life. This period might be described as "Backward to Liberalism." There was always a threat of the farcical or the undignified in the interest Spender took in the young, but Sutherland makes a convincing case that he was kept young, in a sense, by the growth of his gifted children, Matthew and Lizzie. Thus his book about the events of 1968, with the potentially embarrassing title *Year of the Young Rebels*, did not go over the abyss into a glassy admiration of student revolt. And he became one of the first to see the moral importance of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union, with its synthesis of literary and ideological opposition. Having been an early defender of Boris Pasternak, he became an equally early patron of the exiled Joseph Brodsky and a vigorous organizer of petitions and support groups. This sympathy took institutional shape in the 1970s, with the imaginative inauguration of the magazine *Index on Censorship*. Devoted to the battle against repressive governments on all continents, this journal was and remains highly worthwhile. So over the long term Spender had had a part in launching *Horizon*, which for all Cyril Connolly's idiosyncrasies was indispensable to keeping alive a literary pulse in England during the war. Despite being despised by the true editor of *Encounter* and being kept on only as a "useful idiot" by the surreptitious moneymen, he ran a more than respectable "back half" of books pages for the magazine. This is a not altogether shabby record.

Attempts were made to smirch it all the same. Spender rather trustingly indulged a young opportunist named Hugh David, who then produced a scabrous "biography" titled *Spender: A Portrait With Background*. This gave infinite pain, both in its numerous falsifications and in its pitiless exposure of the old boy's days as a gay boy. The same trope was exploited without scruple by the forgettable American "gay

READING LIST

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

Five novels by critics who learned their lesson

BY DAVID KIPEN

I Thought of Daisy, *by Edmund Wilson* (1929). Even Wilson later found this story of a man torn between a poet and a chorine "very schematic, and the scheme does not always succeed, for it is sometimes at odds with the story." Wilson was torn too, between Proust and Joyce. Neither triangle's resolution proved satisfactory.

The Chariot of Fire, *by Bernard DeVoto* (1926). Wallace Stegner once wrote of his fellow essayist and westerner (and *Atlantic* contributor) DeVoto, "He died of a heart attack in New York City, where he would not have wanted to be found dead ..." This forgotten novel about an itinerant evangelist wasn't DeVoto's last or his worst, but publication the following year of Sinclair Lewis's vastly superior *Elmer Gantry* effectively consigned it to oblivion.

The Flight to Lucifer, *by Harold Bloom* (1979). When asked how she could judge movies without ever having made one, Pauline Kael would answer, "You don't have to lay an egg to know if it tastes good." With this "gnostic fantasy," whose very flap copy is a potent soporific, America's best-selling literary critic proved he could lay an egg with the best of them.

Crybaby of the Western World: A Novel of Petit Guignol in Long Beach, California, *by John Leonard* (1968). Both Susan Sontag and John Leonard grew up in southern California, and then hastened to Manhattan to make up for what they saw as lost time. Leonard wrote one mediocre novel and, unlike Sontag, took the hint.

The Rock Pool, *by Cyril Connolly* (1936). In his review George Orwell sniffed, "Mr. Connolly rather admires the disgusting beasts he depicts." The writer William Boyd recently called this novel of a British artists' colony in France "an interesting failure," and found it "self-conscious, straining for effect"—and that's from a Connolly *fan*. This book and *I Thought of Daisy* are the only two on this list in print; it's hard not to suspect they'll go out before the others come back in.

David Kipen is the book critic for the San Francisco Chronicle *and NPR's* Day to Day.

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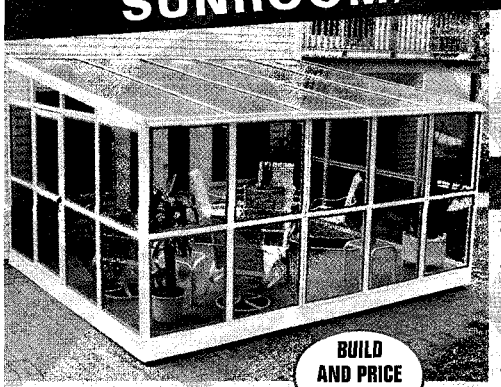

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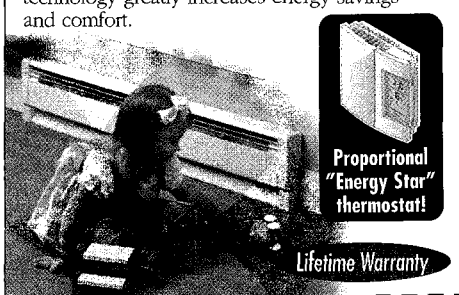

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writer" David Leavitt, who in 1993 extruded a novel called *While England Sleeps* and simply annexed some passages of *World Within World* in order to do so. Yet none of this seems to have prevented Spender from continuing to form friendships with writers younger than himself, of the generation of Peter Ackroyd and James Fenton (two rather acute choices). If his lifelong vice was that he could not stop himself from RSVPing to any old card of invitation, it can still be said of Spender that he continued to take the cheery chance of new encounters.

It may be that Sutherland felt a need to compensate for previous injustices in the writing of this biography, but one sometimes has the sense that his dutifulness became a chore to him. The word "idyllic" is employed so many times, even for scenes of relatively ordinary satisfaction at the seaside or in the countryside, that after a while I stopped circling it. Nothing excuses the use of "prevaricate" for "procrastinate," or "refute" for "repudiate." And Spender may well have been discharged from the Fire Brigade on June 13, 1944, but it is an abuse of a crucial word to say "Ironically, it was the same day that the first of the V-1 buzz bombs fell on London." That barely rises to the level of coincidence. An author has furthermore become far too close to his subject if he can write—this time unironically, and of a domestic row in the ski resort of Gstaad—that "the upheaval dwarfed the Suez crisis."

Still, by the time of his much mourned death, in 1995 (which occurred just after his unprecedented last-minute decision to decline a social invitation from the Holroyd/Drabble household), Spender had managed to outlive the sorts of taunt and nickname ("Stainless Splendor," "Stephen Savage") that his parents had feared when they first forbade him—pointlessly, as it was to turn out—the company of "rough" boys. He had never stopped working. He had never ceased to take an interest. And he had perhaps earned himself the most sentimental line of the much less sentimental poet Philip Larkin: "What will survive of us is love."

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic *and a columnist for* Vanity Fair.

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BOOKS

Chameleon With a Toupee

Bobby Darin was so determined to be somebody that he tried to be everybody

BY DAVID HAJDU

Bobby Darin, the changeling prince of American popular music, has been an object of fascination, suspicion, adulation, and ridicule since the height of his popularity, in the early 1960s. His hit records in myriad styles—including, among others, the early rockers "Splish Splash" and "Queen of the Hop," the swinging standards "Mack the Knife" and "Beyond the Sea," and the folk ballad "If I Were a Carpenter"—endure all over the radio dial, and much of his recording catalogue still sells on CD. Since his death, from heart disease, at age thirty-seven, Darin has been the subject of several books; most notable is this new examination of the singer's life and work by David Evanier, a former senior editor of *The Paris Review* and the author of a good biography of the Mafia's favorite tenor, Jimmy Roselli. Like *Bobby Darin: A Life*, by Michael Seth Starr, *Roman Candle: The Life of Bobby Darin* was published in time to ride the coattails of *Beyond the Sea*, a film about the entertainer directed by and starring the lifelong Darin fan Kevin Spacey, which opened in December.

ROMAN CANDLE: THE LIFE OF BOBBY DARIN
by David Evanier
Rodale Books

Evanier's portrait, true to its title, is one of a bright talent that soared quickly and erupted in a flash of glory. The facts of Darin's life certainly tempt cliché and hyperbole. Born Walden Robert Cassotto, to an impoverished single mother and a father who skipped away without even learning of the pregnancy, Darin was raised in the tenements and housing projects of Harlem and New York's Lower East Side by his maternal grandmother, a would-be singer turned morphine addict whose husband, a two-bit hood called Big Sam Curly, died in prison while serving time for petty larceny. Darin grew up thinking that his mother was his sister (late in his life, when he was considering a run for political office, she decided to tell him the truth before reporters looked up his birth records). Having been stricken with rheumatic fever as a child, he suffered from a weak heart that precluded horseplay, alienated him from his peers on the street, drew him inward, and threatened to cut short his life. His family doctor expected him to live no more than sixteen years—perhaps twenty-one, with luck.

Endowed with a high IQ as well as a knack for music, Darin was admitted to the elite Bronx High School of Science, where he joined a swing combo as the drummer (using a borrowed kit). He entered Hunter College on a scholarship but quit after one term, impatient to move on to the next thing—thereupon setting the pattern for his career. In 1958, when Darin was twenty-two, "Splish Splash," which he had written in thirty-five minutes, became a Top 10 hit and made him a star of the young music for young people: rock-and-roll. The next year he shook off rock to sing Tin Pan Alley numbers with a swing band and had a far bigger hit with "Mack the Knife." Quickly established as a major attraction on the jet-set nightclub circuit, he soon shifted styles again and wrote a couple of country-and-western hits ("Things" and "You're the Reason I'm Living," both of which became country standards); then he decided to record some folk music. He signed a multi-picture deal to act on screen and got an Oscar nomination for his performance as a cocksure World War II pilot in *Captain Newman, M.D.* (1964). After recording one album of Broadway hits, one geared for children (the songs from *Dr. Dolittle*), and a few others, Darin decided to abandon traditional show business altogether. He gave away most of his possessions and moved into a trailer in Big Sur, where he spent his time chopping wood and reading at the public library. He stopped wearing his usual toupee, grew a moustache and long sideburns, and started writing

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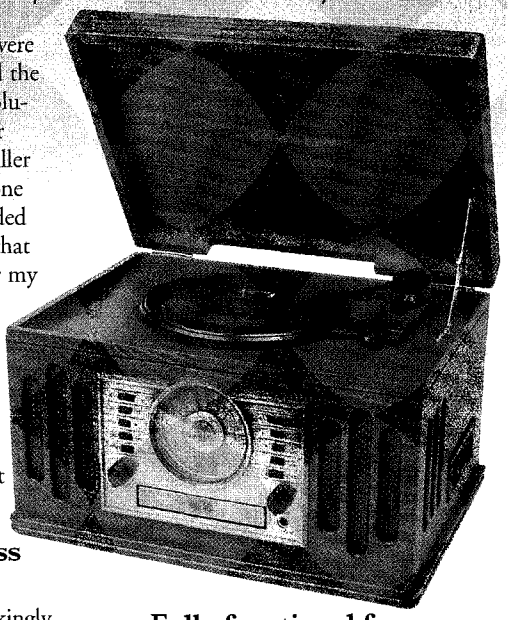

I remember when the big bands were the kings of swing and Elvis and the Beatles were just starting to revolutionize the music scene. I remember hearing Bing Crosby and Glenn Miller on my parents record player—the one that looked like furniture but sounded great. That player was so beautiful that I look for vintage styles like that for my home today. My love for music has grown from the Beatles and Elvis to Norah Jones and Bruce Springsteen. But today's high-tech audio equipment just doesn't fit with my home's classic style. That's exactly why I want to tell you about the Crosley Conductor.

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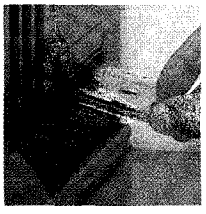

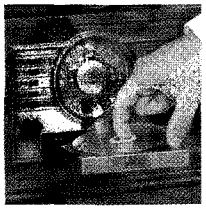

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and singing bleak protest songs under the Dylanesque name of Bob Darin. By the early 1970s he had given that up to make money again, and he was back in a tux and under a toup, snapping his fingers to "Mack the Knife" in his own TV variety series. On December 20, 1973, he died after unsuccessful open-heart surgery.

Evanier makes a commendable effort to explicate this made-for-movie-treatment life story, although he falls short in his analysis of the music that ultimately raises Darin above gossip fodder, and he fails to come fully to terms with Darin's absorption with the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Frustrated and enraged by his childhood poverty, confounded by an inchoate sense of wrongness at home, Darin set out to use his intelligence and creative talent to prove his worth to himself and the world. "Bobby was the unloved orphan, at least in his own mind, dispossessed and homeless," Evanier writes. "There was always a fierce cynical calculation in Bobby's moves ..." Without doubt, the careering in Darin's mode of careerism often seemed conspicuously tactical if not desperate—the quixotic strategy of a man so determined to prove he was *somebody* that he tried to become *everybody*.

Too bookish and fragile for the projects, too rough around the edges for the New York intelligentsia to whom the Bronx High School of Science introduced him, Darin felt lost in his youth and carried a quality of lonesomeness to the end of his life. "I didn't belong, at school or anywhere else," he told the jazz writer Gene Lees. You can see it in the glossy pictures taken for his record jackets and movie posters: there's a distance in his eyes, and when he smiles, his brow scrunches in a quizzical way, as if his face were surprised to be called on to be happy. You can't miss it in the video clips of him performing, especially in the last footage of Darin in concert, taped for television in 1972 and recently issued in a CD-DVD packaged titled *Aces Back to Back*. He would often sing with his eyes closed or nearly so, even on up-tempo numbers, and he had a habit of

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gazing off to the side when he spoke, like a schoolboy whose mind is elsewhere. Above all you can hear it in his music, especially in ballads such as "Black Coffee," "The Gal That Got Away," and the high point of *Aces Back to Back*, "Alone Again (Naturally)," an insipid, bubble-gummy tune that Darin transforms into a wrenching capitulation to despair.

Evanier, echoing a theme of previous books about Darin, portrays the singer's outsize ambition as a side-effect of his illness. He quotes Harriet Wasser, Darin's onetime publicist:

> "He was consumed with his mortality ... He was going to show that if he was not going to live long, he was going to give everything he had. Because he wanted people to remember him."

As Darin once explained to Connie Francis, his girlfriend and female counterpart in teen idoldom, he wanted "to establish myself as a legend by the time I'm 25." In the same vein he told the *New York Post* in 1959, "I want to do everything that anybody's ever done, but better." The following year he told *Life* magazine, "I want to make it faster than anyone has ever made it before ... I want to be in the upper echelon of show business to such an extent it's ridiculous." Bobby Darin's ambition was more frightful than ridiculous. Still, when seen as a strategy for combat with the Grim Reaper, it begins to make sense; in fact, it takes on a dark poignancy.

Although Evanier gives due attention to Darin's preoccupation with death, he does not do justice to the artist's extraordinary treatment of the subject in several of his best-known songs. In his one-page analysis of "Mack the Knife," Evanier points out that the Brecht-Weill composition was originally titled "Moritat" ("Murder Ballad") and traditionally performed as a dirge. He calls Darin's radical upending of the piece "joyous," "celebratory," and "warm-hearted." But how could someone with a life-threatening heart ailment find such joy and cause for celebration in death? Rather, Darin seems to be *mocking* death with the extravagant zeal of his "Mack the Knife"; the record is a masterstroke of satire, a punitive swipe at the singer's ever-present antagonist. He does the same thing in "Clementine," a hard-swinging twist on the old American lament to a young woman who falls from a bridge and drowns, and in "Artificial Flowers," an even harder-swinging take on the story of an orphaned child who freezes to death in her tenement room. The three records are as unnerving as they are exhilarating.

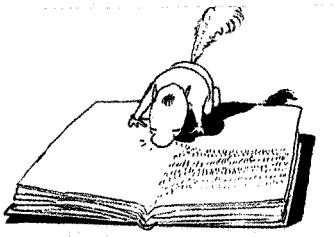
Children of the rock era have always been quick to ridicule Darin for his frequent metamorphoses. Neil Young told an interviewer in *Rolling Stone*, "I used to be pissed off at Bobby Darin because he changed styles so much." (Young went on to say that he later came to see Darin as "a fucking genius.") At the same time, no music has been more susceptible to mutation than rock, and many of its most revered figures have long histories of reinvention. Bob Dylan, the Beatles, David Bowie, Madonna, and even Neil Young all changed styles—and appearances and, in some instances, attitudes—repeatedly without alienating many fans for long. It seems to me that Darin's sin was not really that he took up different sorts of music but that he played to different audiences—moreover, to different generations. In his switch from rock-and-roll to swing he left the Boomers for their parents, an unforgivable transgression in a culture where age is the dominant class system. When Darin attempted to return to the rock generation with his folk-protest work, he was no longer welcome.

Evanier is rough on Darin's venture into gritty, topical music. "He not only removed the tuxedo, he removed the essence of his voice—his whole soul—in the folk period," he writes.

A CLOSE READ

Appraising the substance of style

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



"Skip Potteiger got Mary Lou Brumbach next door pregnant when she was only seventeen but then he married her so it was all right—by D-Day the baby was in a carriage that Mary Lou pushed back and forth on her way to the Acme, over the shallow troughs that carried roof water out to the gutter and the sidewalk squares that the roots of the horse-chestnut trees were tilting up, tripping you if you were on roller skates." — from **Villages**, by John Updike (Knopf)

It's an ideal evocation of the mundane, this sentence, from the pregnancy made "all right" by the wedding (a childish concept, except that the town, too, not just the boy from whose point of view the sentence is written, would think the issue so simply resolved and use that very term) to the trips to the grocery store—its name a word flattened until it connotes run-of-the-mill—to the focus on the minutiae of the sidewalk. The villagers are mostly untouched by crisis; ironic, given the times. But Updike packs more than the village's tranquillity into this passage. The heavy ethnicity of the surnames, coupled with the casual, popular mid-century first names, is a shorthand history of American assimilation, and the troughs for roof water thrust the reader neatly into a lawnless Pennsylvania mountain neighborhood, familiar to Updike's readers. The lines aren't flawless—how can Mary Lou be "on her way" to the store and at the same time be pushing the carriage "back and forth"?—but what's a moment of sloppiness when it's followed by such charm? The final bit about the sidewalk squares, with its alliterative *ts* rattling like skates on bumpy concrete, and its grand trees, and the second person slipping in to make the scene intimate, renders the ordinary positively lovely. The idea of rough patches in a deceptively smooth surface fits perfectly, by the way, with what follows as the paragraph continues: audible quarrels and slammed doors, but no divorces. "Divorces happened elsewhere, in Hollywood and New York." Mary Lou and her baby are so unimportant to this novel as to warrant no second appearance; yet in its authoritative characterization of a particular place and era, and in its unstrained, lyrical precision, this sentence is quintessentially Updikean.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels Drowning Ruth *and* All Is Vanity.

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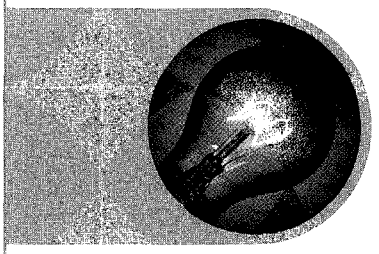

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When Bobby muted his voice, put on his leather cowboy hat, moustache, and sideburns and sang mournfully of dusty roads and buried bodies of convicts in the Arkansas dirt, he did a reasonable impersonation of Dylan, Dave Van Ronk, Arlo and Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger. But why? An artist's obligation is to probe his own soul, not to impersonate the soul of others.

Actually, Darin sounds much less like Dylan, Van Ronk, and those others on his folk-oriented records than he sounds like Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and Johnny Mercer on his swing albums. (Evanier himself mistakes Mercer's voice for Darin's and attributes to the latter a line that the former sings on their album of duets, *Two of a Kind*.) His singing on "If I Were a Carpenter," "In Memoriam" (an homage to his friend and idol Robert F. Kennedy, whose assassination devastated him), "Song for a Dollar" (a scathing critique of his own nightclub years), and other tunes of their ilk is intimate, unaffected, and deeply emotive. Darin sounds very much as if he is probing his soul musically, perhaps for the first time. "Years ago I had the choice between ethnic and plastic, and I chose plastic," he explained late in his life. "And twelve or thirteen years later, it dawned on me that I'd chosen the wrong one." According to Walter Raim, an old friend of Darin's who arranged and conducted his first folk albums, "Bobby saw in folk music a sophistication of some kind ... a higher calling. He had in his mind that he was doing something more important than singing Las Vegas standards. He was attracted to the realness, the down-to-earth thing." It is startling to read this and to think of Darin as a paragon of authenticity.

Ultimately, "If I Were a Carpenter" is surely Darin's truest moment as an artist. His theme, for once, is the illusory nature of his own identity. Would you still love me, he asks, if I were not what I seem—if I were someone much simpler? Evanier is scarcely the only Darin fan inclined to answer no.

David Hajdu is the author of Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn *and* Positively 4th Street: The Lives and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Fariña and Richard Fariña.

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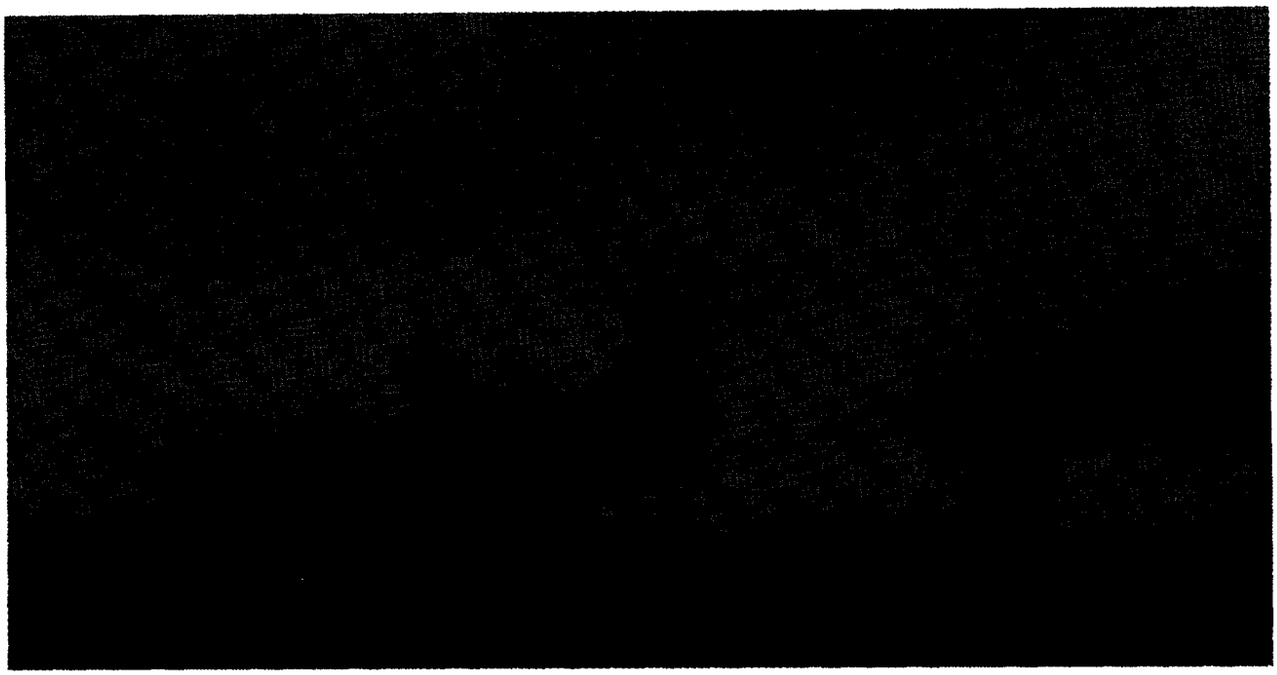

SHORT STORY

A Record Book for Small Farmers

Had her father been a coward all these years, his reticence a cover for things he was afraid to say?

BY ANNA NORTH

In the few hours since she'd arrived, Lucy had already learned to categorize farm sounds. Some were dark—the full, low voices of the cattle, the groan of the pipes when she turned on the heat. Others were light—the scraping of the gate on its hinges, the ping of the leaky pump against the metal bucket. And there was a windy sound, a thin swish followed by a crisp and hollow contact. Lucy didn't seek it out right away. She was moving slowly today, still a little shell-shocked from the news and tired from the journey. She walked among her father's cattle, looking in their blocky faces as they huffed and chewed. A dead man's dog goes into mourning sometimes, curling up in its master's chair with loyal, grieving eyes. But the cows' eyes were like polished stone. The cows seemed more like landforms than animals.

After he retired, Lucy's father, Skye, had bought the ranch with the idea of starting an organic farm. He wasn't a whimsical man; for forty years he'd sold insurance out of the same office in Williston, Montana, so the new passion was something of a surprise. He and Lucy spoke on the first Sunday of every month, a system they'd established after her graduation from high school, ten years earlier, and when he told her he was going to make cheese, she had nearly laughed out loud. But he was not the kind of father you could laugh at.

"Artisanal cheese," he'd said. "It's the next big thing. People pay top dollar."

He'd already bought a herd, the milking equipment, books called *Your Organic Farm* and *Good Food From the Good Earth*. He'd hired a man from town to help him with the animals; problems with his heart in recent years would keep him from lifting heavy loads.

"Are you sure this is a good idea, Dad?" Lucy remembered asking.

"First," he'd said, "we're going to make Gouda."

But no Gouda ever materialized. Nor did any other cheese. First the cows got mastitis, and Skye tried every homeopathic treatment he could find before finally resorting to antibiotics. That meant no organic certification that year, and very little milk. The next year, when he was ready to begin again in earnest, the cows started dying.

The sound came again, a whistling and a final *thwack*, and no cow so much as raised an ear. Lucy waved a hand before the face of a big sleepy roan, and it blinked before returning to its cud. They deserved their fate, Lucy thought as she left their pasture. They were so oblivious.

The source of the sound was the hired man, and Lucy stopped for a moment when she saw him. In the morning light he looked like a vengeful god. He raised a machete over his head long enough for it to catch a glint of sun and then brought it down against the tall grass with a quick, hard stroke. Only when she came close did she see that his shirt was dark on his back, and that underneath it he was as skinny as a bug.

"I'm Lucy," she said, obviously startling him.

"Malcolm," he said. He almost offered her the knife; then he dropped it and gave her his hand instead. "I'm ... I'm sorry about your dad."

"Me too," Lucy said. In the few days

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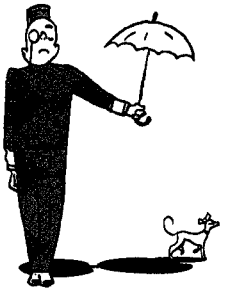

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since she'd heard the news, this was the best response she'd developed. "Were you with him?"

Malcolm ran a hand through his hair; the sweat made it stand on end. "I came to the hospital. But during the surgery he ..."

"Right. That's right." Malcolm was much younger than Lucy had expected. The beard that stubbled his cheeks was still patchy, sparse. He had nervous eyes that flicked across Lucy's face and flicked away, making her uneasy.

"Listen, you don't have to do this." Lucy pointed awkwardly at the half-cut grass. "I know you must be looking for other jobs."

"It's my fault," he said. "I let it go too long, and now it's a big mess."

"Don't worry about it. I mean, if you need the time to find another place." Looking at his skinny arms, she added, "How old are you, by the way? Are you in school?"

"I'm nineteen. No more school for me." He picked up the knife again. "I got time to get this done before I go. I kind of owe him one."

She realized with mild shock that Malcolm, working beside Skye every day for a year, might have spent more time with him than she had. During Lucy's childhood summers, when her mother would drop her off at her father's door and then drive away without looking back, Skye had worked all day. When he came home at night, he might talk to her about the firm, explaining the nuances of a claim or the difficult personality of a client, just as though she'd been an adult. Or they might sit in his living room and read. They were comfortable together, more so than she had ever been with anyone thereafter. Certainly more so than she was with her mother, who had a wheedling way of making statements that were really questions, casual remarks meant to burrow under your skin and get at your soul.

Lucy and her father might have talked more had she been a boy. She'd had a close male friend, Donny Maslin, who had visited her at Skye's house outside Williston the summers she was fifteen and sixteen. Her father had taught Donny to shoot a gun, and the two had gone hunting together, setting out in the mornings before Lucy woke up. They behaved almost like father and son, even physically—through the window on a windy morning she once saw Skye smooth the hair back from Donny's forehead and let his hand rest there, as though testing for a fever. When she asked Donny what they talked about, he shrugged and said, "Guy stuff."

She didn't feel jealousy then, only the tight, restricted feeling of looking in an atlas at a place to which she would never go.

"Well, you did good work," Lucy told Malcolm. "I know he appreciated that."

Malcolm nodded, opened his mouth to say something, and then failed. They both stood there for a moment, Lucy feeling that more talk was called for, Malcolm boring the blade of the knife into a clod of dirt.

"Did he take it real hard when you lost the cows?" Lucy asked finally.

"First time," Malcolm said, "he didn't let on. He just went out the next day and bought a dog. Next time he walked around the whole day cursing that dog. 'Useless animal,' he called it. 'That damned useless animal.'"

Lucy was embarrassed. She had never heard her father curse; the information was too intimate. Now that Malcolm had started talking, she wanted him to stop. But he was on a roll.

"I said it wasn't the dog's fault. Some breeds just aren't guarding breeds. And the one we got, it was just an old mutt. It looked big, but anybody could've scratched its ears and made it roll over."

"I see. Well ..."

"After the second one we got the Rottweiler. You know, Tim, the one chained up in the tool shed. And when the third cow ... went, he couldn't understand how somebody got past both the dogs. But the reality is that anyone with a pound of steak can keep a Rottweiler quiet. I told the police that when they came, and they said it's true, they've heard of cases where you can shut a Rottweiler up with hamburger, or even a salami."

"Wow," Lucy said, at a loss.

Malcolm dug his machete farther into the dirt.

"But yeah, he took it hard. Third time he broke a pitchfork with his hands."

"Wow," she said again. She could

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only vaguely imagine her father's acting with such violence. She could see his hands as the tool snapped, but not his face. She had the sense that Malcolm had all along been talking about another person.

"You kind of look like him," Malcolm said. "You've got those quiet eyes."

Lucy cleaned. She heard Malcolm working in the fields, saw him occasionally as he hauled off a stack of broken boards or a dead tree branch. She'd offered him a generous sum to help her ready the place for sale, and he had actually haggled her down. Now she stayed out of his way; seeing him at work, skinny and baby-faced as he was, made her feel a little guilty. So she chose projects that kept her near the house, and that offered the comfort of repetition. She was washing windows when the police came. She saw them saunter across the other side of the glass, a woman and a man, the woman stopping in front of the door to scrape something off her shoe.

"I hope we're not bothering you," the man said. His name was Officer Gooding, and he explained to Lucy everything she already knew about the cows. He had a sleepy face and an air of someone going through the motions.

"We have just a couple of very brief questions," he said. "Shouldn't take more than a moment of your time."

"Sure." Lucy squeezed her sponge into its bowl of water.

"Ms. Halpern," the woman, Officer Kern, asked, "did your father tell you about the incidents?"

"He said somebody had been killing the cows. He told me after the first time and after the second. I didn't talk to him after the third."

"Did he have any idea who might be responsible?"

"He thought probably a drifter. He said they shut down the asylum over in Nyman a year ago, and a lot of people are on the loose that shouldn't be."

Gooding nodded wearily at Kern. Kern continued, "Anyone who might have wished your father ill?"

Lucy wet the sponge again and wrung it once. "Nobody but Mom, and she passed away four years ago. Plus she was a vegetarian."

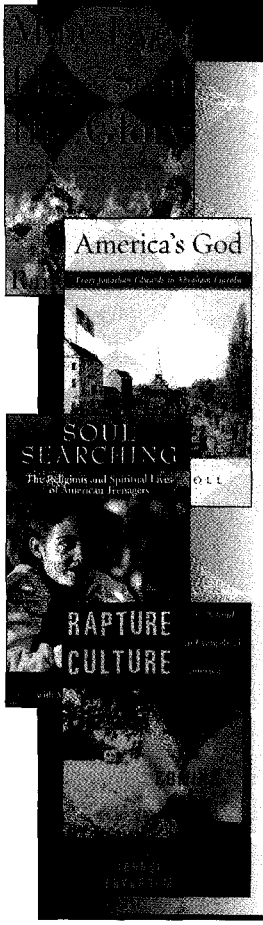
Lucy's mother, Denise, had been hit by a car when Lucy was twenty-four. In the years before that she spoke of Skye rarely but always in the same way, so by age ten Lucy was able to stop listening.

"I don't mind a quiet man," she'd say, "but I want one who speaks his mind. I wanted to slap him sometimes, just so he'd say ouch."

Apparently she never had. Skye never spoke of her with any anger, and Lucy didn't get the impression that they'd fought. Denise had left the marriage quietly, during the night, and he had agreed quietly to all the provisions of the divorce. Skye had never raised his voice with Lucy; she could not imagine his doing so with anyone.

Donny was another matter. The summer she was sixteen, Lucy had come down one morning to find her father eating oatmeal and Donny gone. Skye's eyes had darted up at her; his expression was

GOD AND COUNTRY



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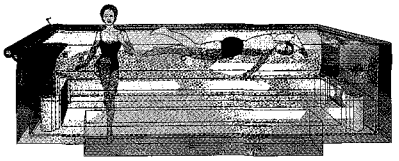

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hard to decode—perhaps regret or anger. Then he explained that he and Donny had had "a political disagreement." She pressed him for details, but he wouldn't elaborate. Talking about arguments was in poor taste, he'd told her once, like gossip. Still, she could imagine how it must have gone. Her father was very conservative, almost reactionary. And Donny read Marx, had a youthful socialism and a hot temper.

"Did you fight with Dad?" Lucy had asked him over the phone.

"We had a disagreement," he said in a strange, dry voice. "He just had some ideas, and I ... look, it was my fault."

Donny seemed deeply embarrassed, and Lucy thought perhaps he had said something really unkind to her father. Now, though, she wondered if it might have been the other way around. She could no longer ask Donny. She had completely lost track of him after that summer.

"We'll be in touch," Officer Kern said. "And I'm sorry about your father."

"Yeah," Lucy said, "me too."

After the police left, Lucy realized she'd forgotten to ask them the only thing she didn't know about the cows. Observing her father's sense of delicacy, she'd never asked how they had died.

The room where Skye had lived was almost bare. His bed lay unmade, the blankets probably disarranged by the paramedics. Lucy had never seen him leave a bed unmade. She stripped the sheets and put them aside for Goodwill. She made a point of doing this quickly, preoccupied as she worked by the phrase "airing dirty laundry." Above the desk, where she had half hoped to find a snapshot of herself, was instead a black-and-white photo of a wide river flowing between pebbled banks. On the floor, as though hurriedly cast off, was a hat—a trucker's cap, with a bill, a kind she had never seen her father wear. Across the front was stitched "Williston Tigers"—a high school team, she thought. Around the inside was a stripe of white salt.

She found Malcolm downstairs in the kitchen, cleaning the broiler pan of the stove. He was doing a rather bad job, scraping at caked grease with a soft and grimy sponge.

"Is this yours?" she asked, holding up the hat.

"Oh, yeah. Where'd you find it?"

"In my dad's room, on the floor."

"Oh." He stopped scrubbing, and appeared to concentrate on the water in the pan. Lucy started back up the stairs.

"It must be from that time he borrowed it," Malcolm called after her. "Because I never went up there."

From the desk drawers Lucy removed paper clips, a checkbook, jars of Bag Balm and Vaseline. Except for these everything was labeled—a folder called "Accounts," another "Recipes," another "Investment Data." A box containing stamps, envelopes, and a pen bore the label "Correspondence Materials." Lucy remembered his folding invoices in thirds and addressing them to clients, his hand calm, precise, and thorough. He had taught her cursive; she still had his crisp *s*s and sure capital *I*s.

In the top drawer she found his logbook. It was bound in imitation leather, its cover stamped "A Record Book for Small Farmers." Inside was an ad for some sort of organics consortium, followed by dated pages arranged in columns. Skye had filled the columns with weather reports, and with numbers of which Lucy could make little; occasionally he had added a few notes. Some mentioned repairs, several referred to the mastitis crisis, one recorded the presence of a stray dog in the upper field. Then Lucy found the first death.

The date was May seventh. The weather was fine. In the "Notes" column Skye had written, "Found Sally today. Upper field, throat slit. Dead for hours."

The delicacy of the first sentence against the bluntness of what followed made Lucy cringe. She thought of shutting the book, and then she went on.

The next death was three weeks later. This time the note was simpler: "Berta found, same as Sally."

And the final one, a full four months after the initial kill: "Dicey lost, just like other two. Buy barbed wire for the fences."

He hadn't gotten a chance to put up the wire, because his heart had given out three days after the third cow. On that day Skye had written, "Fresh hay

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in the back stalls. After dark, a ring around the moon."

The police had arrested a suspect. His name was Tyler Norb, and he had indeed been released from Nyman. He was a paranoid schizophrenic, and had been discovered skinning a dead dog by the railroad tracks. He said its name was Satan. The police had found a number of mutilated squirrels in a bag he carried. They hadn't found any large weapons on him, but he did have an array of broken bottles and pocketknives. When questioned he readily admitted to having killed "lots of animals," and could not remember if that included Skye's cows or not.

"Given Mr. Norb's state," Officer Gooding explained, "it's unlikely he'll be found fit to stand trial. So we're not going to get that 'case-closed' kind of satisfaction here. But he'll be moved to a high-security facility, and I doubt you'll have any more problems."

Lucy thanked the officer. She could tell he was eager to be finished with her father's case, tired of protecting the property of a dead man. He'd probably seen her ads in the town paper; he knew she was selling off the herd. Even if Norb wasn't responsible, she wouldn't have any more problems. But of course there was no reason to doubt it had been Norb. She thought about the mechanics of slitting a cow's throat with a pocketknife or a piece of broken glass. Just because she couldn't imagine it didn't mean it couldn't be done.

Lucy walked by the tool shed to pick tomatoes for dinner. She hated going this way; whenever she passed the door, Tim snarled bloody murder.

After she had eaten, and washed her dishes, and put all the plates and silverware away in cardboard boxes, she went to look for Malcolm. For some reason she thought he deserved to hear about Norb from her. She found him leaning against the barn, with a bottle of something in his hand.

He seemed startled to see her, and then regained his composure. "You want some?"

"You're not old enough to drink that, are you?"

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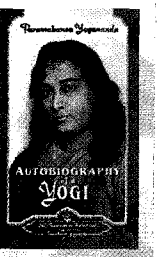

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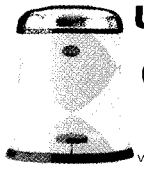

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He laughed nervously. "You gonna call the cops?"

She accepted the bottle and took a small sip. Wild Turkey. "This was my dad's favorite," she said.

"Yeah, I know. On the rocks, with a splash of water."

Lucy smiled. "Or with vermouth, on special occasions."

"When you smile," he said, "you don't look like him anymore. You look like that woman on the mantel."

"My grandmother. She and my dad were close." The bourbon warmed Lucy's skin.

"She was a pretty lady."

Lucy wondered if he was coming on to her. She had nine years on him, but it was still possible. His face had a sweet callowness she liked, sort of unspoiled. She tried to steer the conversation back to safer territory. "You ever going back to school?"

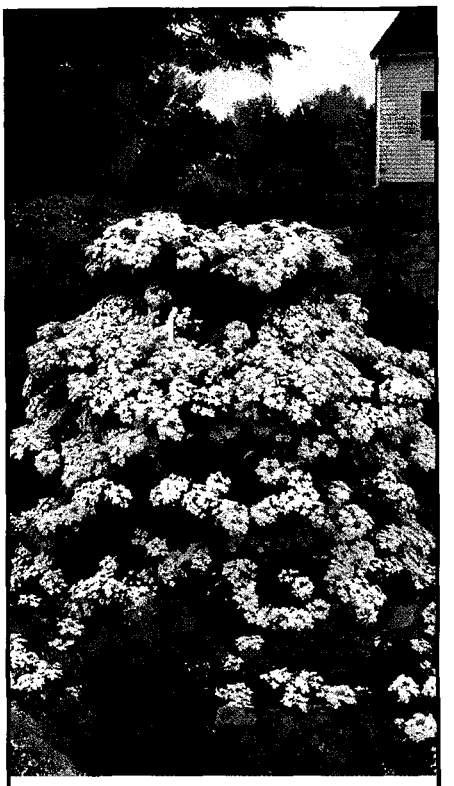
"Nah," he said. "That place was bullshit." She could hear the booze make its way into his voice. "They just feed you something, you spit it back, like a baby. And the girls are all the same: same clothes, same—I don't know—hair, same voices when they laugh."

"You ever have a girlfriend?"

He took a quick drink. "Sure, lots of times. But like I said, they're all the same. What about you? I bet you've had lots of boyfriends."

She wasn't used to answering such questions, but his tone was so ingenuous that she forgot to be offended. In fact she had had lots of boyfriends. The first had been in junior high, an older boy with a scar down his back. She never knew where he got it, or anything else about him, because the only place they met was down by the wash behind the bowling alley, and the only things he said to her were hello, good-bye, and "I won't be coming here anymore."

Then there were three in high school, quiet ones whose mothers she never met, whose middle names she never learned, whose rooms were mysterious countries full of objects that never became familiar. She knew such tiny shards of these boys' lives that when she graduated, and the one who loved her came around, she was overwhelmed. Lucy had always felt a trans-



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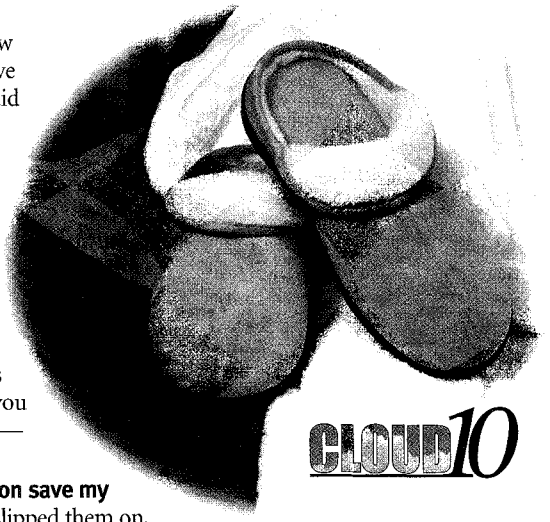
Relaxation therapy for your feet

Visco-elastic foam has changed the way people sleep, now it helps the way you walk.

by Leigh Ligon



My feet hurt! How many times have you heard *or* said that...standing in line at the grocery store or simply while doing daily routine tasks? I feel like the older I get the more my feet ache. I've tried elevating my feet, soaking them in hot water and expensive massage therapy—but to no avail. That's why I'm so excited to tell you about my recent discovery—CLOUD 10 Slippers!

How did a NASA invention save my feet? From the moment I slipped them on, they molded to the shape of my feet like I had a custom fit pair of slippers made especially for me! The slipper's insole is made from visco-elastic memory foam originally created by NASA. This foam equalizes pressure, reduces stress and tension and provides incredible comfort.

According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, as people age, their feet tend to spread, and lose the fatty pads that cushion the bottom of the feet. Additional weight can affect the bone and ligament structure. These slippers mold to the contours of my feet through my body's heat and weight, literally cushioning every single step I take.

Technologically advanced slippers mold to the contours of your feet making each step feel like you're walking on Cloud 10!

Did you know that the average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day, which adds up to about 115,000 miles over a lifetime? No wonder we all have tired, aching feet.

I've seen similar kinds of slippers, but I couldn't afford to spend nearly $70 a pair. The Cloud 10 Slippers were a much better fit for my budget. The outer material of these stylish slippers is beautiful tan faux suede and they feature a cozy, fleece-lined interior and collar to provide added warmth. The durable rubber sole is perfect for my quick trips outdoors to grab the morning paper.

- *Inner sole is constructed from visco-elastic memory foam*
- *Body heat molds foam to cushion feet for maximum support*
- *Super-soft, fleece lining provides added warmth*
- *Durable rubber sole—perfect for quick outdoor trips!*

If you have arthritic feet like I do, you suffer from inflammation and pain in your joints. Our feet have to last a lifetime and I've decided to stop neglecting the part of my body that keeps me mobile.

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lucent but impenetrable barrier between herself and everyone else in the world; when suddenly it was breached, she was disoriented, dizzy. And when he left her for another, she was oddly relieved to close that breach, to look at herself crisp-faced in the mirror and say, well, she had never really known him at all.

To Malcolm she said only, "A few."

"Good guys?"

"Not all of them."

"I'm sorry." He offered her the bourbon, which she accepted, still careful not to take too much. A breeze blew and disarranged her hair; Malcolm reached out and smoothed it back, letting his fingers rest a long moment on her skin. Lucy recognized this gesture, and took only a second to place it: Donny and her father, a windy morning after hunting, she behind the window glass, irrevocably removed. And even though it meant nothing now, the little warm spark between Malcolm's hand and her forehead, it made her conscious of a thing she must have known all along: the longer that touch lingered, the less fatherly it became.

"Want to see something?" Malcolm asked.

Lucy was suddenly eager for distraction. "Sure."

He led her out into the upper field, still clutching the bottle in his left hand. At night the assembled cows looked ancient and immobile, like Stonehenge. Malcolm went up to one and scratched it behind a soft ear. It looked up, big wet eyes catching the moonlight, and let out a throaty sound like an expression of sympathy.

"See?" Malcolm said. "She's a talker—aren't you, Minty?"

Malcolm scratched again, farther back, and this time Minty let out a low moan like a foghorn.

"She makes different noises depending on how you scratch her. After a while you can almost understand what she's saying. Want to give it a try?"

Lucy tickled the cow on top of her heavy head. Minty groaned.

"What's she saying now?"

"She's saying she'll miss me," Malcolm said. Then, whispering to the cow in that silly soft voice people use for

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pets, "I know, Minty; I'll miss you too."

A sentimental thought crossed Lucy's mind. "Do you think they miss my dad?" she said.

"When Minty got sick, they gave us this herbal stuff to put on her. You were supposed to do it every hour, but the guy said we could let it go at night. But Skye didn't let it go. He put a sleeping bag up in the field, and woke up every hour to rub her down. I went out there once, and he was singing to her, just like a baby. He was singing 'Kookaburra.'" Malcolm took a drink. "I guess they ought to miss him."

Lucy asked, "Do you?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Lucy saw a hot resentment flicker on Malcolm's face. "Nothing," she said. "Sorry."

They sat on the ground in silence. Malcolm kept on drinking from the bottle, and Lucy pulled up blades of grass coated with cold dew. The air was moist, and water vapor made a pale, soft ring around the moon—all signs pointed to rain.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," Malcolm said after a long while.

Lucy felt herself entering a conversation she would rather avoid.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean now. I don't know where I'm gonna go." His anger was gone, and his voice sounded choked, like that of a child trying not to cry.

"Do you have family?"

"Just some cousins over in Boise. Dad's in jail. Mom has this boyfriend who's a dealer, so they move around ..."

"I'm sorry."

"I'd join the Army, but I got to wait another year."

"I thought you were nineteen."

His face in the moonlight, with its soft, uneven growth of beard, answered her before he did.

"Nah, I'm sixteen." He raised the bottle to his lips again, drank deeply, rocked his head back, and repeated himself: "Sixteen. One. Six."

The numbers pinged in Lucy's brain. She had the unwelcome sense of a curtain's being lifted away.

"Did my dad know how young you were when he hired you?"

"No," he said, his voice tightening. "I told him later, but it didn't matter." He stabbed his thumb into the earth and pulled up a little divot with grass still attached. "Nothing made any difference to him except the stupid cows."

He threw the divot in Minty's direction, hard but aiming to miss. The cow stirred and groaned softly. In a moment she was still again.

"I'm sorry," Malcolm said.

Lucy turned away from him. "You don't have to apologize."

"Yes," he said, "I do."

Malcolm opened his mouth to speak again. Lucy had never been more sure what someone was going to say. She knew why the dogs had been quiet—not just the old mutt but the big Rottweiler who snarled even at Lucy. Norb could have killed a cow with a pocketknife, maybe, but a machete would have made it much easier. She remembered her mother's clockwork complaints, the fury that made her want to hurt Skye just

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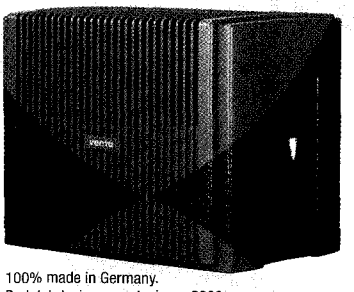

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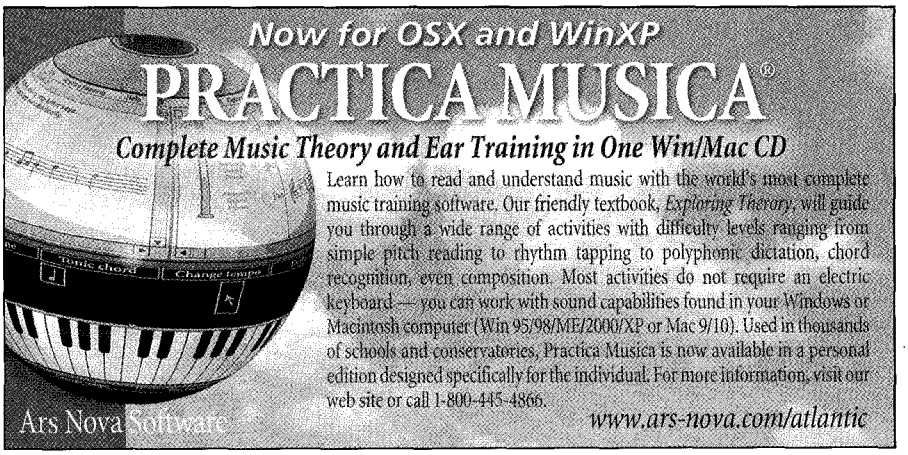

to break his silence. How much greater must Malcolm's fury have been, the boy sixteen and terrified, craving a reassurance that was repeatedly and cruelly withheld. Had her father really been a coward all those years, his reticence a cover for things he was afraid to say? She thought of his expression the morning Donny had left, the one that looked like anger or regret. After Malcolm spoke, it would forever look like shame.

Lucy braced herself for what was coming. And then she did not let it come. "They caught the killer," she said.

Malcolm shut his mouth and opened it again. "What? They did?"

"His name is Tyler Norb, and they found him by the railroad tracks, skinning a dog."

Malcolm looked confused.

"He's from Nyman," she said. "Just like we all thought."

"Yeah," he said after a moment. "Just like we thought."

He looked at her with an expression she decided to take for gratitude. Lucy stood and brushed the dewy grass from her jeans.

"You know what I think?" she asked, her voice crisp and authoritative.

He shook his head.

"I think you should go get some sleep. And in the morning you can look up your people in Boise."

Malcolm said things, good-night wishes perhaps, things to which Lucy did not carefully listen. Then he walked off across the grass, and Lucy did not follow him, did not watch his skinny, shivering form recede in the moonlight. Instead she stayed in the field for a while. The breeze had died down, and the night was clear. The ring around the moon was gone. Perhaps it wouldn't rain after all. Lucy walked over to Minty and stroked her warm back. She thought of Skye sleeping beside her, waking every hour to give her medicine and sing her a song.

"He took good care of them," she thought, and she knew this thought for what it was: the first of many defenses that would grow together until they covered her, heavy and soft, like a blanket or a layer of earth.

Anna North is a senior at Stanford University. This is her first published short story.

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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

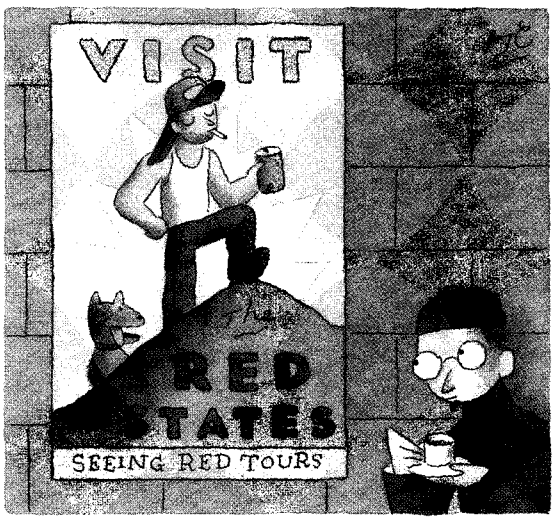
People to People

Some say that liberals and conservatives need to build bridges of understanding. Drawbridges might be better

BY CULLEN MURPHY

Much of the punditry in the immediate aftermath of the elections involved the apparent division of the United States into mutually unintelligible camps called red America and blue America. By now we all know what these camps represent. In their consternation some of the losing blues reached out, speaking of the need to tap into and imitate red America's "values" talk. Other blues retreated into their shells, defensively proclaiming membership in a "reality-based," as opposed to a "faith-based," community. Still others joked about secession (the "two-state solution," as one friend put it), with the separated chunks of blue America resembling the old East and West Pakistan, which hung like earmuffs on predominantly Hindu India. Of course, secession would not be simple. There are many blue city-states (Aspen, Austin, Santa Fe) embedded in red America, just as there are red enclaves (central Pennsylvania, Greenwich, Fox News's Manhattan headquarters) in blue America, and full separation would require the kind of tense arrangements familiar to those living in the West Bank. Any fortified wall we might build would need numerous crossing points to let in the red workers on whom the blue economy depends, and vice versa. The security gate at the Connecticut–New York border, where Republican bankers and traders from the suburbs enter Democratic territory, passing Democratic maids and gardeners with day passes heading the other way, would be one of the most heavily trafficked in the world—America's version of the Kalandia checkpoint, north of Jerusalem.

So secession is unlikely. But that's not to say there won't be carpetbaggers. In all the recent commentary the most pervasive theme was the need for blues to stop being snooty and standoffish and get down with reds. "The Democratic Party's first priority should be to reconnect with the American heartland," wrote the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof. If blues are to make a comeback, wrote Thomas L. Friedman, another *Times* columnist, they'll have to find "a positive message that connects with America's heartland." It is only a matter of time before we see the first well-meaning diplomatic missions into red America, spearheaded by opinion leaders in blue America. Sociologists will venture into the red homeland like Lewis and Clark (and cover much of the same ground), returning with descriptions and specimens and suggestions for exploitation. Before long, anthropological sightseeing trips into red America will become a chic new form of blue tourism, as curious urbanites forsake Machu Picchu and Angkor Wat for Hattiesburg and Topeka. Companies with too-cute names (Seeing Red Tours? Heartland of Darkness Travels?) will spring up to offer package trips.



Tourism is always stunningly quick to colonize emerging market niches, no matter how unlikely they may seem. During the Balkan civil wars, in the 1990s, specialty travel agencies offered tours of Sniper's Alley, in Sarajevo. Tour companies now take visitors into the contaminated no-man's-land around Chernobyl, right up to the concrete sarcophagus above the toxic core. In Russia the military helps make ends meet by letting foreign tourists play with weapons at the Ryazan tank range. Visitors to Dallas can tour the route of John F. Kennedy's motorcade in a Cadillac that plays sounds of crowd noise and cheering until, below the book-depository building, shots ring out and the car veers off to Parkland Memorial Hospital. People travel long distances to visit the Vietcong tunnels in Vietnam and the underpass in Paris where Princess Diana died. Outside Grutas, in Lithuania, a mushroom magnate and former wrestler named Viliumas Malinauskas has built a theme park known as Stalin World. "I wanted a place that combines the charms of Disneyland with the worst of the Soviet gulag," Malinauskas explains.

What would tourism in red America be like? It's not hard to imagine how a certain elite stratum of blues would engage in it. To begin with, they'd insist on bringing their own food. Clutching copies of *Main Street*, *Middletown*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *What's the Matter*

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A LOOK BACK

45 YEARS AGO IN THE ATLANTIC

"The Job of the Washington Correspondent"

On September 23, 1959, his seventieth birthday, the columnist Walter Lippmann gave a speech before the National Press Club, in Washington, D.C. The text, an excerpt of which appears below, was published in the January 1960 issue.

Last summer, while walking in the woods and on the mountains near where I live, I found myself daydreaming about how I would answer, about how I would explain and justify the business of being opinionated and of airing opinions regularly several times a week.

"Is it not absurd," I heard the critic saying, "that anyone should think he knows enough to write so much about so many things? You write about foreign policy. Do you see the cables which pour into the State Department every day from all parts of the world? Do you attend the staff meetings of the Secretary of State and his advisers? Are you a member of the National Security Council? And what about all those other countries which you write about? Do you have the run of 10 Downing Street, and how do you listen in on the deliberations of the Presidium in the Kremlin? Why don't you admit that you are an outsider and that you are, therefore, by definition, an ignoramus?

"How, then, do you presume to interpret, much less to criticize and to disagree with, the policy of your own government or any other government?

"And, in internal affairs, are you really much better qualified to pontificate? No doubt there are fewer secrets here, and almost all politicians can be talked to. They can be asked the most embarrassing questions. And they will answer with varying degrees of candor and of guile. But, if there are not so many secrets, you must admit that there are many mysteries. The greatest of all the mysteries is what the voters think, feel, and want today, what they will think and feel and want on election day, and what they can be induced to think and feel and want by argument, by exhortation, by threats and promises, and by the arts of manipulation and leadership."

With Kansas?, the travelers would set out in hybrid minivans from the Ninety-second Street Y, in Manhattan, for points west, and from Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, for points east. The itinerary might include opportunities for worship at the Willow Creek megachurch, in Illinois, and for aesthetic uplift at the Thomas Kinkade Cottage at the Creek, in Tennessee. There would be stops at Maurice's Bar-B-Q, in South Carolina, and at processing plants for the Slim Jim meat product (wherever they are). A breakfast at the Iowa 80 Truck Stop, in Walcott, the largest in the world, would be included, and an afternoon at a Hallmark Cards "partners in rhyme" brainstorming workshop, in Kansas City. Fluent local guides would offer guaranteed sightings of authentic teen beauty queens and pro-life activists (no photos, please!). Tourists could mix and mingle with natives by working as greeters at a rural Wal-Mart. The sort of person who appears in denim and turquoise after a weekend in Taos would return to Santa Monica or Cambridge in dress sweats and a Pennzoil cap.

Needless to say, the trail wouldn't have to be one way. Blues have long been enthusiastic about arranging for the betterment of others. Programs modeled on the American Field Service and Fresh Air Fund exchanges, and perhaps underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts, could send young red Americans into blue states to spend a summer with typical families—watching indie films, drinking bottled water, ordering clothes from J. Crew. The payoff from this sort of program is never immediate; the hope would be to plant the seeds of glasnost for harvest decades later in Oklahoma or Utah.

But *does* interaction across borders foster understanding? George Orwell, writing while on a rare vacation in Marrakech in 1938, was skeptical.

> I'm not sure how much good travel does to anyone. One thing I have always believed, and that is that one really learns nothing from a foreign country unless one works in it, or does something that really involves one with the inhabitants. This trip is something quite new to me, because for the first time I am in the position of a tourist. The result is that it is quite impossible, at any rate at present, to make any contact with the Arabs, whereas if I were here, say, on a gun-running expedition, I should immediately have the entrée to all kinds of interesting society.

And there is no guarantee that any understanding that did occur would be positive. Mark Twain had his eyes opened by a trip to Palestine, and the region felt the lash of his scorn. Tobias Smollett's *Travels Through France and Italy* is one long complaint. Sometimes it is the travelers themselves who raise eyebrows. Think of British yobs on the Costa del Sol, or Germans pushing to the front of lines everywhere. As a schoolboy in Dublin, I used to dread the onset of summer: it brought planeloads of Americans, my countrymen, loud and friendly, vulgar and generous, reinforcing a caricature that did not always strengthen the bond of respect between our two peoples. Saul Bellow remembers hearing William Faulkner address a group of writers during the Eisenhower administration. Faulkner told the group,

> The President has asked me to head the People-to-People program for writers. And I have invited you to assemble here to outline a set of suggestions—my first proposal is that we should take away all U.S. passports and prevent Americans from touring foreign countries. That will restore the good name of the U.S. abroad.

There's a long-standing constitutional precedent, as I recall, that forbids restrictions on interstate travel, so Faulkner's proposal isn't something we can consider for domestic use. Too bad, because it may be that the more extreme personifications of blue and red America need not exposure but separation, and the moderating insulation of people around them whose minds are on other things. What their relationship may need, in other words, is the kind of strategy that worked so well for Lord and Lady Curzon. "The best years of the Curzons' marriage were spent in India," the biographer David Gilmour observed. "They were often apart and, when together, were seldom alone."

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic*'s managing editor.*

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MUSIC

X Jazz

The pianist Matthew Shipp is the star of the latter-day free-jazz scene —the only scene in jazz right now with younger faces in the audience

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

I think of Donald Barthelme's short story "The King of Jazz" whenever I'm at a party and people at a loss for appropriate small talk after I've said I write about jazz ask me to name a good place in town to hear some. They want me to point them to a hangout like the one that Hokie Mokie, Barthelme's king of jazz, strolls into after inheriting the crown from the deceased Spicy MacLammermoor—"Hi Bucky! Hi Zoot! Hi Freddie! Hi Thad! Hi Roy! Hi Dexter! Hi Jo! Hi Willie! Hi Greens!" A hangout with all the giants on the bandstand or at the bar, being fawned over by an audience for whom the music is incidental to the satisfaction of not being square.

In reality, it's been two full generations since being a jazz insider was taken as proof of being hip, and almost as long since jazz fans or musicians agreed on such basic issues as what jazz is and who the legitimate heirs of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, and John Coltrane are. The problem with wanting to dig the scene is that there isn't a scene anymore—not one that could live up to the fanciful expectations of the people I politely excuse myself from at parties, by that point not merely pretending to need another drink.

What jazz does offer today, along with a bewildering profusion of subgenres and hybrids, is vest-pocket scenes, the most vital of which is the most marginalized—banished to the furthest reaches of bohemia in its home base of New York City, and documented chiefly on musicians' vanity labels and small labels here and abroad. The music—which is descended from the avant-garde "free jazz" of the 1960s (the title of a 1961 album by Ornette Coleman, the movement's founder), and proud of it—may be too extreme for anyone desiring only a foot-tapping beat. Otherwise, if the party was in New York, before excusing myself I would advise people to keep an eye out for Steve Dalachinsky, a stream-of-consciousness poet and a loquacious advocate for his favorite players. His presence is a guarantee that on any given night you're where the action is.

You're sure to spot Dalachinsky handing out flyers or minding the CD table at the annual Vision Festival, val is the best time to hear everybody and meet everyone. The music may be uncompromising, but the vibe couldn't be friendlier.

Last May, a few weeks before the festival, Dalachinsky and a handful of other regulars were among the large crowd that showed up at the Blue Note for a one-nighter by the pianist Matthew Shipp, the closest thing this scene has to a star. The swankiest of New York's frontline jazz spots, the Blue Note was a move up for Shipp—a club with a menu and tables instead of folding chairs. He dressed for the gig as always, in slacker's T-shirt and jeans; the polished loafers he wore in place of his customary sneakers were the lone hint of occasion.

where the odds of being drawn into a conversation with him, or with one of the other regulars, or even with a performer who's hanging out to listen after finishing his own set, are equally good. Presented over several nights leading up to Memorial Day, in a variety of homey Lower East Side locations that have included a former synagogue and a recreation center, the Vision Festi-

Bespectacled and tall and still wiry in his early forties, Shipp is the most dynamic and advanced of a growing number of pianists his age and younger whose starting point is the turning, elongated approach to melody and the inching, fragmented rhythms that Cecil Taylor introduced to jazz in the late 1950s, in the aftermath of bebop. These innovations still haven't been absorbed

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into the jazz mainstream, and Taylor long ago set off in a more open-ended direction. But often when Shipp or another pianist of similar inclinations seats himself at the bench, Taylor's fingerprints are already on the keys. In Shipp's case, the similarity is infrequent enough to be knowing. The long list of other pianists Shipp draws from—Bud Powell and his skewered runs, Thelonious Monk and his rhymes, McCoy Tyner and his harmonic magic carpet—is somehow proof of his individuality. The earlier pianist he most resembles, in impact more than approach or touch, is the relatively unsung Mal Waldron, who specialized in tension-and-release—though he frequently made do with just tension. Shipp, too, tends to worry a phrase as though something about it is eating away at him, and his solos don't "swing" in a way that a jazz listener with conservative tastes might recognize. Instead of giving the impression of ongoing forward motion, they go back and forth and around in circles, inexorably dragging you along.

Shipp was in top form at the Blue Note, where his trio featured the bassist William Parker and the drummer Guillermo E. Brown, his teammates in the tenor saxophonist David S. Ware's rhythm section. They demonstrated their usual rapport, not merely accompanying Shipp but improvising their parts on equal footing with him and frequently taking the lead. A highlight of the set was Shipp's own "Three in One," a waltz that suggested both Monk and a sinister twist on "Rockabye Baby." More surprising, since Shipp only occasionally plays standards, was a hammering interpretation of the Sinatra barroom anthem "Angel Eyes" that obsessed on the phrase corresponding to "try to think," calling up drizzle and blinking neon signs and other images from film noir.

I was surprised to learn, when I met Shipp for coffee the following morning near his apartment on the gentrified tip of Alphabet City, that he didn't know the lyrics or even the song's bridge. "I get that from Ran Blake," he told me, naming one of his teachers at the New England Conservatory, a maverick pianist whose own music is haunted by movies and images from his dreams. "Because he's a film buff, Ran structures his interpretations that way, with songs going through different 'scenes.' And I've always had plenty of film images and dream images of my own."

Something Shipp undoubtedly gets from Cecil Taylor is his athleticism; his attack starts in his shoulders, and biding his time during a dialogue between bass and drums, he makes fists over the keyboard and pumps them like a prizefighter waiting for the bell to begin the next round. "It's unconscious," he said when I remarked on it, "but I must be doing it, because you're the third person to tell me. The first high school I went to, before I got expelled, my friends and I used to talk on the phone at night and decide who we were going to beat up the next day. I'm a total pacifist now, but following boxing is my major hobby, and the way they used to talk about Cecil Taylor emulating the leaps of dancers—well, I'm not emulating a boxer, but I guess it does enter the fray."

The latter-day free-jazz scene of which Shipp is a part—along with Parker, Brown, Ware, the drummer Susie Ibarra, and the saxophonists Rob Brown, Daniel Carter, Charles Gayle, and Assif Tsahar, among others—is the only one in jazz right now with younger faces noticeably represented in the audience. I don't mean *young*, mind you; that would be hoping for too much. I mean people a decade or two younger than Baby Boomers like Steve Dalachinsky and me.

Free jazz was wrongly blamed for chasing people away in the late 1960s, around the time that the graying of the jazz audience first became a grave concern. The truth was more complicated. By then soul music and psychedelic rock not only had achieved greater popularity than jazz ever dared to hope for but also, in some odd way, had eliminated any need for it. No longer greasy kid stuff, pop suddenly offered simplified and easier-to-find versions of everything that had once drawn certain kinds of listeners to jazz: its own Charlie Parker and John Coltrane in Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, its own Stan Kenton in Frank Zappa,

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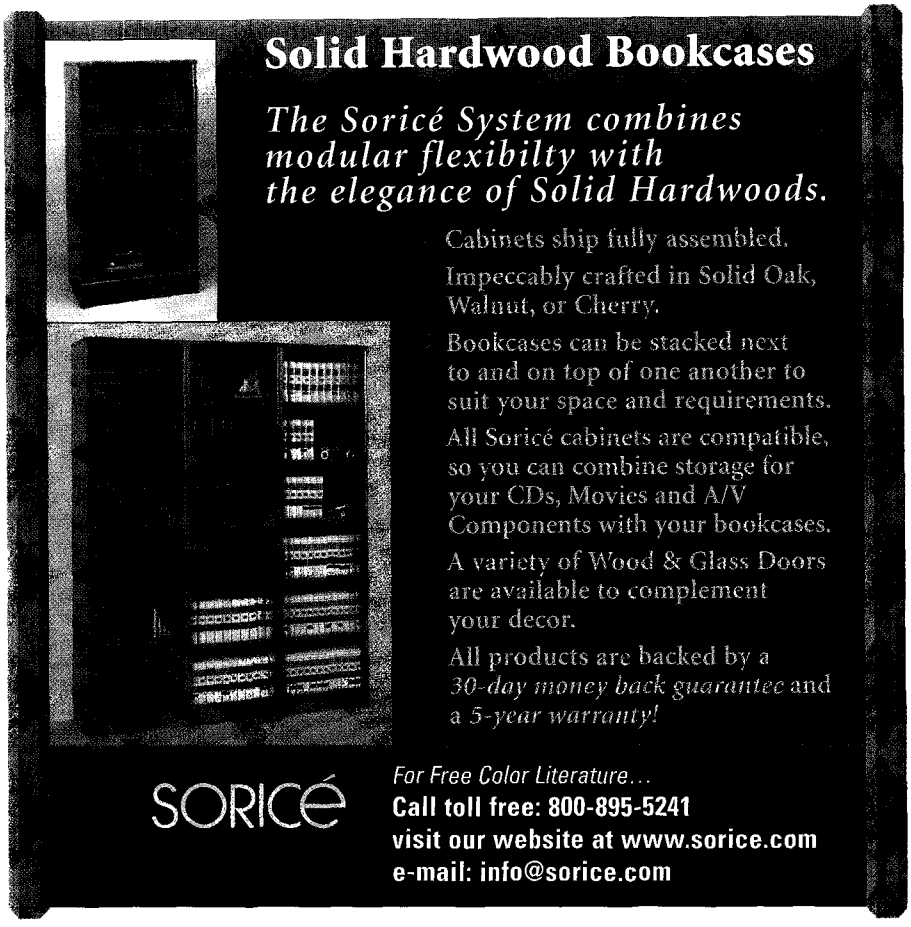
its own wigged-out Ornette Coleman and Sun Ra in Captain Beefheart and George Clinton. Plus you could dance to it. The most telling blow came when James Brown, and then Motown artists led by Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye, embraced black consciousness. Unlike that era's politicized jazz, which generally relied on titles to communicate pride and outrage, their music had the advantage of lyrics—not to mention the ear of black America.

Jazz survived despite all of this, but just barely. It joined classical music as one of those fine arts that people pay lip service to out of guilt but shy away from out of fear they might be too difficult. (This is increasingly what passes for high culture today: yesterday's no-longer-popular pop culture, coming soon to your public-television station. Rock-and-roll is already on its way.) The fanfare surrounding Wynton Marsalis when he burst onto the scene almost twenty-five years ago was widely taken as evidence of a return to traditional values in jazz, following two decades of self-indulgent experimentation by avant-gardists, and commercial compromise by Miles Davis and his former sidemen. But even Marsalis, who as the son of a journeyman jazz pianist was presumably exposed to the best in jazz more or less from the cradle, has admitted to having liked such jazz-rock fusion bands as Weather Report and Return to Forever as a teenager, before renouncing them for bebop and Ellington. And although Marsalis has remained steadfast, many of the slightly younger players once counted among his disciples, including the trumpeters Nicholas Payton and Roy Hargrove and the bassist Christian McBride, have lately been toying with techno and electronica.

Are these younger players selling out or heeding generational inclination? They grew up with pop—like Shipp, who at one point during our conversation interrupted himself when a song on the radio caught his ear. It was something from *Uh Huh Her*, the latest CD by P. J. Harvey. "I love her," Shipp said. In 1999 Shipp signed with Thirsty Ear, a label whose catalogue also includes CDs by such alternative-rock bands as Throbbing Gristle, Teen-



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age Fanclub, and Gay Dad. In addition to serving as "curator" of the label's new jazz series, he has recorded numerous collaborations with what he refers to as "beat artists," meaning rappers and DJs from the hip-hop underground. (The very notion of unrecognized hip-hop experimentalists may be a shock to many jazz listeners, who, like adults in general, assume that hip-hop is all MTV awards, drive-by shootings, and bling bling.)

Shipp has in fact enjoyed a following outside jazz since the early 1990s. That was when the audiences for free jazz and post-punk bands such as Sonic Youth and Yo La Tengo began to overlap, partly because word got out that the bands' members were devotees of free jazz, and partly because Shipp cultivated relationships with alternative-rock labels. Shipp's fans include Thurston Moore, of Sonic Youth (whose collection of free-jazz vinyl from the 1960s and 1970s is legendary); Henry Rollins, of the 1980s hardcore band Black Flag, whose label 2 13 61 released the CDs that brought Shipp airplay on college radio; and Lenny Kaye, the guitarist with Patti Smith's band, who offered Shipp a job with Smith.

Shipp is still as likely to be featured in such rock fanzines such as *Yakuza*, *Puncture*, and *Forced Exposure* as he is to be interviewed for *Downbeat* and *JazzTimes*. Marsalis, despite his wish to be our day's Duke Ellington, is more like our Leonard Bernstein—which I mean as no small compliment. Officiating, in his role as the director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, at what amount to Young People's Concerts for adults, he has greatly expanded the cultural establishment's appreciation of jazz and respect for its history. But tradition and the mature elegance that Marsalis sees jazz as epitomizing are a tough sell to the young—especially those who prize all-out aural assault.

Today's youth culture is a body culture, and both Shipp's music and free jazz as a whole are far too cerebral ever to become a significant part of it. Even so, I suspect that in listening to free jazz, many intellectually curious younger people vicariously experience a thrill similar to the one experienced by participants in skateboarding, motocross, BMX, and the sports featured at the annual X (for "extreme") Games. And also similar, perhaps, to the thrill Shipp himself experiences watching boxing and ultimate fighting.

At various times free jazz has also been called "avant-garde," "free form," "the new thing," "out jazz" (as in "far out"), and, for a brief spell about ten years ago, "ecstatic jazz," referring to both the party drug Ecstasy and a religious trance. "A lot of us meditate, including me," Shipp told me, "and there is a strong Pentecostal element to the music—speaking in tongues and the descent of the Holy Ghost—going back to Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders in the 1960s. So I guess the idea of an ecstatic religious experience isn't totally off base. But I'm just as glad that one never caught on."

Shipp prefers "free jazz." "The idea," he said, "is that what we're doing is a revival of that." Free jazz is an alternative music unlikely to be co-opted. But what its younger followers might find even more appealing is that something actually seems at risk in its heated improvisations. A good name for what Shipp and his fellow revivalists are up to might be "X Jazz"—even when it's acoustic, it's *amped*.

Shipp freely admits to being ambitious. He says he "practices" being interviewed, and word has it that he drops into a shop in his neighborhood that specializes in avant-garde music almost daily to see if he's moved any CDs. The question I bet he gets at parties—although that didn't stop me from playing square's advocate and asking it anyway—is, Since free jazz dispenses with bebop's framework of chord changes, what guidelines do its improvisers follow? He gave a detailed and patient answer. "You might present a band with just eight bars of written music and encourage them to improvise on that using their own vocabularies, expanding on those eight bars of music rhythmically, harmonically, or melodically," he said. "There might be a set of melodies or just a gesture in the direction of one, but you keep extrapolating

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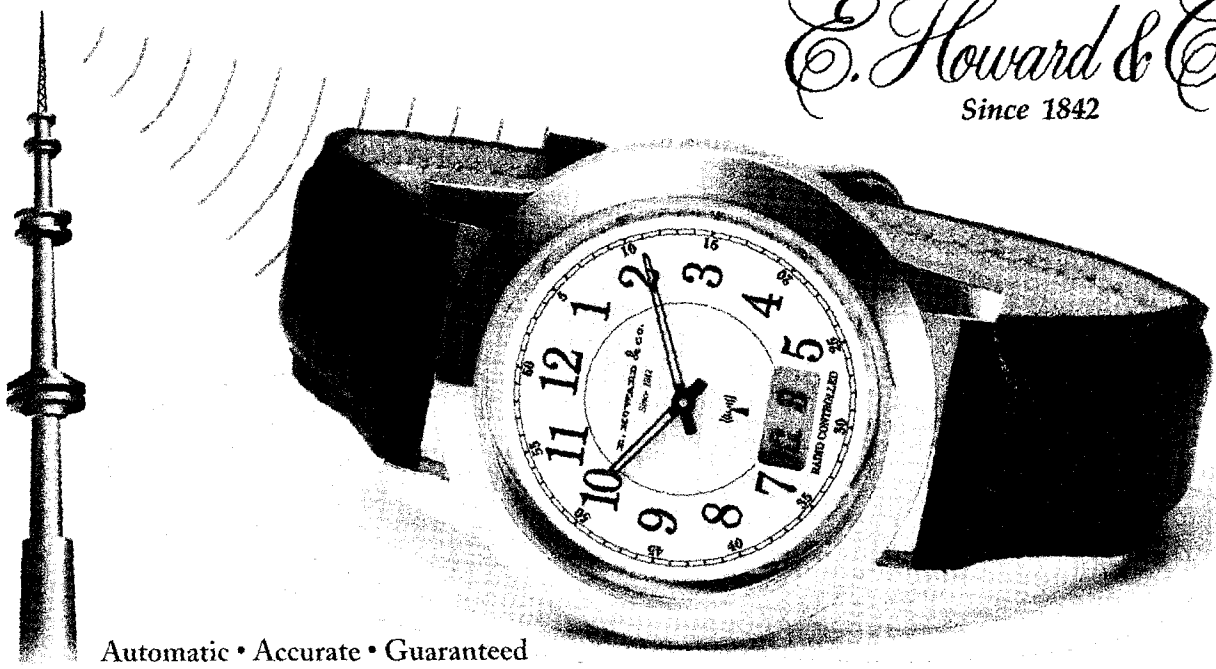

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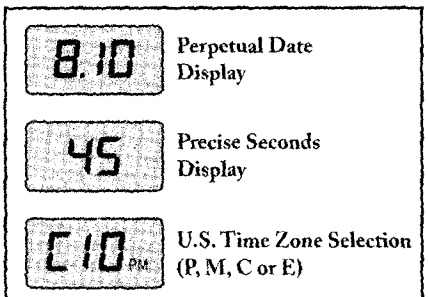

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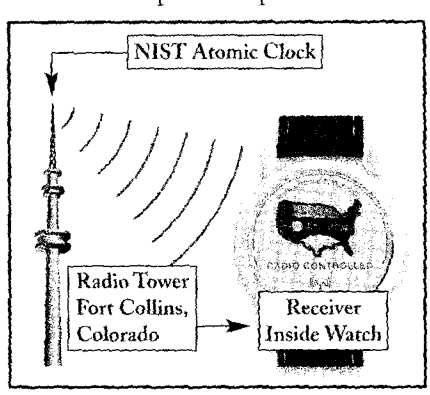

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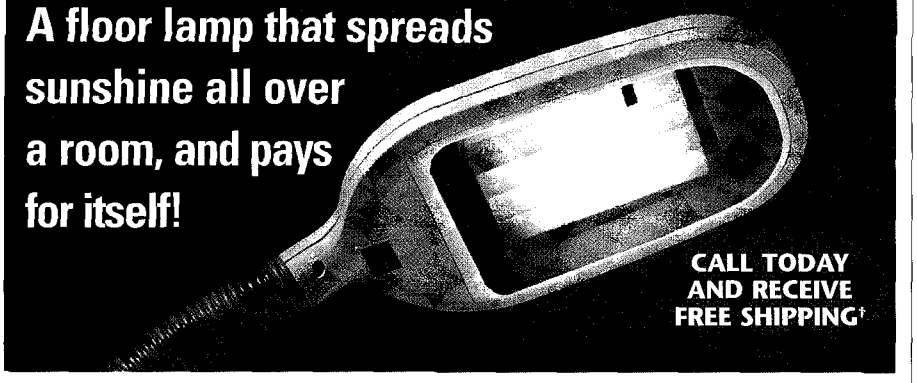

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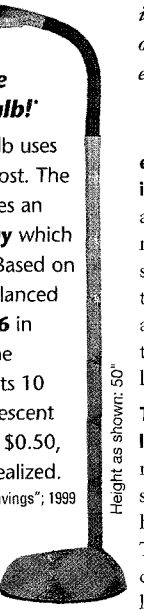

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from that. And sometimes my pieces actually have chord changes, though not like in bop—more like a set of bass lines or a general harmonic movement of some kind."

On the new *Harmony and Abyss* (Thirsty Ear) the drama is in hearing Shipp's trio, featuring Parker and the swift drummer Gerald Cleaver, interact with the loops and sampled beats furnished by Chris Flam, the album's co-producer (billed here as just FLAM). Free-jazz fans can be as set in their ways as anyone; spontaneity is a fetish with some of them, and they fear its loss when studio technology is added to the equation. But FLAM's electronically generated sounds are dissonant and elliptically dreamlike, rarely lapsing into facile man-versus-machine allegory or mindless turntable wicky-wicky. And Shipp, for his part, proves more adaptable than most of the neo-beboppers and modal colorists who have attempted this sort of thing and failed.

Shipp's other recent release is *The Trio Plays Ware*, on the Italian label Splasc(H), a program of eight compositions previously recorded by Ware's quartet, this time without the leader. Ware's pieces may be little more than springboards, but here they convey a rapturous sorrow independent of his baleful solos. Shipp has become a more economical improviser than he used to be, possibly as a side effect of emulating pop recording techniques (and all to the good), and he wrings every last nuance out of these melodies. *The Trio Plays Ware* is as good a starting point as any for newcomers to Shipp. But for the especially wary, an even better introduction—to him and to the latest manifestation of free jazz he represents—might be *Songs* (2001), another Splasc(H) CD, featuring his interpretations of several standards; a hymn; an English carol; one tune each by Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson, and Sonny Rollins; and an interpretation of "Angel Eyes" almost as startling as the one you missed unless someone told you the Blue Note was the happening place to be one rainy evening this past spring.

Francis Davis is a contributing editor of The Atlantic *and writes a column on jazz for* The Village Voice.

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TRAVELS

Russia's Holy Warriors

Fervently Orthodox, anti-Islamic, and proudly militaristic, the Cossacks are on the rise in Vladimir Putin's new Russia

BY JEFFREY TAYLER

Last year I joined Russian police officers and Cossack militiamen as they carried out a joint patrol in the Cossack capital of Novocherkassk, on the Don River, in southern Russia. In a clunky gray Interior Ministry van with tinted windows and oversize tires, we made our way through the center of town, bouncing and roaring through thick fog and along cratered blacktop. Probing the murk ahead of us, our headlights revealed glimpses of wintry desolation: wooden huts, squat and weathered and sunken in snow; skeletal tree branches glazed with hoarfrost; and bundled-up pedestrians traipsing sullenly through the slush, some of them already staggering from early-evening libations. In the front seat ahead of me sat two fur-hatted policemen in gray parkas, armed with Kalashnikovs; beside me were four unarmed, camouflaged Cossack militiamen.

I was not at ease. It was January 13 (New Year's Eve by the Julian calendar), and security was heavy throughout the city. Novocherkassk is 375 miles to the northwest of Chechnya (practically a border town, given the size of the country), and during the past decade secessionist Muslim rebels have taken to crossing into nearby towns in the southern provinces of European Russia—where historically Christian Europe has abutted the Caucasian realms of Islam—to blow up buses, trains, and markets; the rebels' seizure of a school in Beslan was the latest and most shocking episode in this conflict. Indeed, these attacks represent an important reversion to what was the norm in the region for centuries before the Soviet era: violence between Russia's two dominant religious groups.

"We Cossacks are Christians," said Valerii Alyokhin, a jovial, brawny Cossack first lieutenant whose round white face ended at the black knit cap covering his brow. "So we'll never be friends with Muslims—*never*. We won't let them build mosques here." Novocherkassk, like most towns in the south, has a Muslim minority made up of people from the Caucasus. For Alyokhin, the war in Chechnya was only the latest manifestation of an age-old Muslim campaign aimed at dismembering Russia, whose territorial integrity, he said, it was the Cossacks' sacred duty to protect. "Though it was hidden in Soviet days," he continued, "we've always lived with this religious tension—with this state of semi-war with the Muslims that you Americans only discovered after September 11. We long ago learned what you're just learning now: never flirt with those who despise you for your religion." He alluded to a poster we had seen at police headquarters showing Russia's Most Wanted: all were Muslims associated with the Chechen conflict. Almost all were swarthy, too; in Russia as in the West, trouble between Muslims and Christians involves elements of racism. Alyokhin wasn't shy about admitting this. "We warned the *chernozhopy* [black asses] here that we'll respond in kind to any attacks on Russians," he said. "If they dared try anything, we would leave no *chernozhopa* untouched."

Cossacks honoring their people's service to Russia, Omsk, 1992

Crude words, these—but nothing in the Cossacks' past, as either slaughterers or slaughtered, has favored subtlety. Legendary for both their equestrian skills and their martial talents, the Cossacks galloped into Russian history in the fifteenth century. By settling and defending the steppes south of Russia, they helped the resurgent forces of Muscovy begin to break free of the Tatar-Mongolian rule, under which Russians had languished since 1240. But the probable homeland of the first Cossacks was a sea of undulating feather-grass steppe surrounding the lower meanderings of the Don and Volga Rivers. Military organization and discipline allowed the Cossacks to survive unrelenting assaults from an array of fearsome nomads now long vanished, from Turks, and from raiders based in the Crimean and Astrakhan Tatar khanates—Muslim states that eventually fell to expanding Muscovy. The Cossacks defined themselves and their homeland

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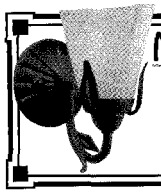

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in military terms. They called their country Oblast' Voiska Donskogo ("Province of the Don Host," or army), and all men served as irregulars (though with rank) who were called to battle when the need arose. They ruled themselves democratically, electing chieftains in rowdy, informal village assemblies known as *krugi* ("circles"). In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Cossacks' golden era, the oblast, whose borders encompassed what are now the Volgograd and Rostov regions, enjoyed diplomatic recognition from Russia and also Persia.

Early on, Cossacks earned a reputation as anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic fanatics—in addition, of course, to being implacable foes of the region's Muslims. A people of mixed ethnic roots, bound as much by a fervent Orthodox Christian faith as by a spirited animus against Islam, Cossacks frequently pillaged their non-Orthodox neighbors, killing men, carrying off women, and seizing whatever loot they could stuff into their saddlebags. In pre-Soviet Russia (whose history from the rise of Muscovy onward was marked by tyranny, serfdom, and oppression, to say nothing of timid, even groveling deference toward despotic rulers) Cossacks held themselves above others as *vol'nye*, "free," but in a defiant sense of the word that approaches "willful" or "domineering." A love of liberty seemed to define their identity—even if that liberty often amounted to the bloody plunder of those around them.

Mostly hostile to communism, the Cossacks suffered widespread repression during Soviet days, but they launched a successful revival under Boris Yeltsin. Since 1991 twelve Cossack academies have opened across Russia to educate the young. Cossack units have been formed in the Russian army. Cossack troops have guarded Orthodox churches and monasteries, patrolled Novocherkassk and other "border" towns, and helped Russian police officers conduct searches during terrorism alerts. Some Cossacks, I had heard, were even calling for the re-establishment of the Oblast' Voiska Donskogo, which the Bolsheviks abolished after coming to power. Because President Vladimir Putin has vowed repeatedly to revive Russia and fight Chechen separatists, the Cossacks may now have a better chance than at any other time since the 1917 revolution to return to prominence in Russian national life.

A few days before going on patrol I had accepted an invitation to dine at the home of Irina Firsova, the genial director of a five-member Cossack musical ensemble called Rodnik ("The Source"). On a snowy evening, in the homey glow of low-wattage yellow bulbs, I sat with Irina, her husband, Vladimir, and her fellow Rodnik members around a kitchen table covered with sausage, cheese, salted cucumbers, mushrooms, and, of course, bottles of vodka.

Vladimir, a portly man in his fifties with a defiantly high shock of white hair, poured us all hundred-gram shots of vodka and asked everyone to stand. We did, and raised our glasses. The ensemble welcomed me with a song as deafening as it was spirited—to which I could imagine men in conical fur hats hurling aside tables and performing the famous, tendon-tearing Cossack squat-and-kick dance called the kazachok. After the song they shouted, "*Na zdorov'ye! Na slavu!*" ("To health! To glory!"), and we gulped down our vodka.

Seated again, I mentioned that I had read much about the Cossacks' military prowess—words I intended as a compliment. I told them that during my years as a graduate student in Russian history, in the mid-1980s, I was taught that the first Cossacks were serfs who escaped bondage in northern and central Russia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, fled south, and established themselves in a remote frontier zone, which the Kremlin allowed them to occupy as long as they functioned as a sort of military caste that kept the Turks and other Muslim peoples at bay. This is a theory still widely held in Russia. Today the Cossack academies, which are funded by the state, teach cadets not to work for the rebirth of the Oblast' Voiska Donskogo but to serve Russia with honor as members of this military caste.

My words sparked a voluble reaction from my hosts. "We are *not* a caste," said

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Yana Samsonova, a woman in her twenties whose dark eyes, black hair, and fleshy form embody the Cossacks' concept of beauty—decidedly non-Russian and almost Middle Eastern. "You have to be *born* a Cossack. No matter what I do, I can never become a Chechen. It's the same thing, a matter of *blood*."

"We accepted the runaway-serf theory to please Russia, the imperial power," Vladimir said. "Look, you don't call a Chukchi 'reindeer herder,' because that's his occupation; he's a Chukchi first. The same with us and soldiering. We are a *people*, not a profession." He produced a photocopied page from a czarist-era encyclopedia showing Cossacks listed as second (after Russians) among the Slavic peoples of Russia, and another showing that Cossacks wrote "Kazak" ("Cossack" in Russian, a word possibly of Turkic origin) under the heading *natsional'nost'* ("ethnic group") on government forms in the first years after the 1917 revolution.

This sensitivity originates in the Cossacks' history, which is one of sovereignty and freedom followed by massacre and humiliation. Even as their ranks were swelling, the Cossacks' golden era began slipping away with a job offer from Ivan the Terrible of Muscovy, in 1570. To revive Russia, Ivan hired the Cossacks to defend Russia's southern frontier, paying them in lead, gunpowder, and bread. But as Muscovy grew more powerful, it enserfed ever greater numbers of peasants, entrenching misery throughout its population. In 1670 a Cossack named Stepan Razin raised the banner of revolt from the Caspian to Simbirsk (present-day Ulyanovsk), far beyond the oblast, decrying czarist serfdom as worse than the slavery practiced by "Turks or heathens." The revolt failed, and Razin was executed. In 1707 another Cossack revolt broke out, and in the following year Peter the Great issued what may have been one of the first genocidal orders in history: "Burn [the Cossacks], leaving nothing behind; slaughter the people; strap the ringleaders to the wheel and impale them, for this mob cannot be pacified save by cruelty."

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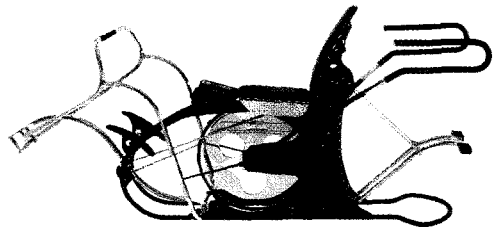

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but later, fearing Ottoman expansionism, Peter allowed a revival—on the condition that Cossacks accept an *ataman*, or chieftain, appointed by the czar to rule the oblast. They agreed. Moreover, sensing that they couldn't resist the embrace of a newly powerful Russia, the Cossacks found a role as the czars' most effective shock troops and bodyguards.

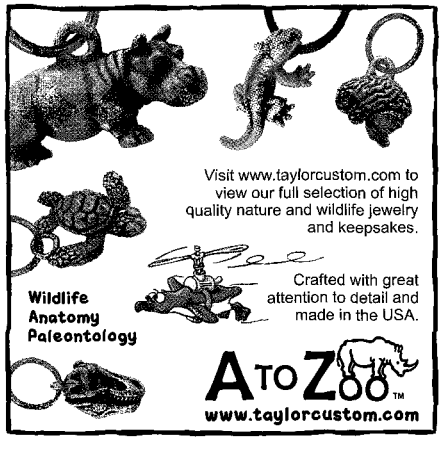
In 1919 the advancing Red Army drove abroad tens of thousands of White Army Cossacks, and captured most of the rest. Vladimir showed me a widely circulated 1919 editorial in a Bolshevik paper that read, "One has to notice the similarity between Cossack psychology and certain representatives of the animal kingdom. The Cossacks must be burned up in the flame of social revolution."

Most were. On December 30, 1919, Lenin issued the second order for mass murder in Cossack history, demanding that approximately one million Cossack prisoners be "executed to the last man"—that is, men, women, and children all. Close to two million Cossacks were shot, exiled to Siberia, or stripped of their land and livestock in Stalin's collectivization campaign and reduced to the same Soviet serf status as the rest of the country's peasants. From then on in Russia, as a result of state propaganda, the word "Cossack," whether signifying a people or a caste, became a byword among many non-Cossacks for Orthodox extremism, the reactionary, and the retrograde. Hence the tetchiness of my hosts.

"Democracy was the law of our land," Vladimir said, trying to set the record straight. "This was *real* democracy, unlike in America, where your Electoral College chooses the leader. The Cossack *krug* had legislative power: we voted by raising our hands and shouting '*Lyubo!*' ["It pleases us!"] or '*Nelyubo!*' ["It does not please us!"] for our three officials: the *ataman*, the scribe, and the treasurer. The greatest disgrace in our eyes was to be a *kholop*"—a serf or slave.

Irina said, "Cossacks *never* bowed or curtsied when greeting others; they only nodded their heads. We *never* knew slavery."

They stood up and raised their glasses,



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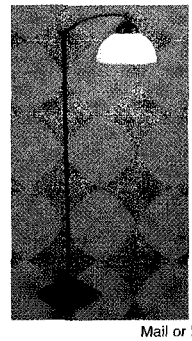

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which Vladimir had just refilled, and belted out another song.

Balding and muscular, and in his thirties, Mikhail Bespalov is a Cossack filmmaker and writer from Rostov-on-Don who has risked his life for Russia, first as a commander defending the Supreme Soviet from the Communist coup attempt of August 1991, and later as an officer in the Transdniester and Abkhazia conflicts, fighting in support of Russian minorities who were under assault by ethnic majorities eager to establish sovereignty in their homelands. (The Russians, thanks partly to Cossack intervention, won in both cases—at least unofficially.) Renowned as a Cossack leader, Bespalov traces his roots to a seventeenth-century *ataman* and the Zaporozhian Cossacks immortalized by Gogol in the novel *Taras Bulba.*

"If you don't recognize the Cossacks as a people, then we have nothing to discuss," he told me in lieu of a more polite greeting when we met for a talk in the lobby bar of my hotel. He explained what many now consider the most credible theory of the Cossacks' origin: that they were an ancient warrior people of Scythian stock, referred to as the Kossaraka in Greek inscriptions found near the Black Sea; runaway serfs came later, bringing to the Kossaraka Christianity and the Old Russian language from which modern Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian developed in the thirteenth century.

Bespalov has a steely smile, literally: he lost his front teeth in the Transdniester war and replaced them with a metal bridge. "The Cossacks were never serfs," he told me, "so we couldn't be driven back into slavery the way the Russians were"—an allusion to the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the "re-enslavement" following the 1917 revolution. "The Bolsheviks knew they could only give the Cossacks their independence or destroy us to the last man."

Bespalov told me how, in 1991, he had organized the Cossacks' storming of the Communist Party headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, with the aim of seizing documents that would incriminate the outgoing regime in the slaughter of his people. "We put tremendous pres-

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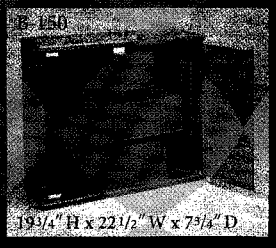

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sure on the authorities in 1991," he said, referring to those in Moscow who, then as now, viewed the issue of Cossack statehood as long since resolved in the Kremlin's favor. "The 101st Don Division came over to our side. The deputies of our Rostov oblast soviet voted to re-establish the Cossack republic, but it was never implemented."

Bespalov didn't dwell on his own role in these conflicts; always he was just doing his duty, both to Russia and to his Cossack brethren. He lamented the machinations of the Russian secret services, which, he said, had hounded the Cossack movement "out of the sphere of the visible"; but he spoke like a disciplined and capable dissident who—working within the system rather than galloping off wildly like his ancestors in pursuit of unbounded liberty—had ambitions for the future, not complaints about the past.

He looked hard at me. "There could have been another Chechnya here," he said, referring to what might have happened if the Cossacks had decided to press for independence. "So maybe [the Cossack movement's] faltering saved people from—from major disruptions. If the oblast is restored, it will be because people here want it." This seemed a reasonable and responsible approach—an ethnic renaissance is one thing, but a campaign for independence is another. I therefore felt no discomfort in believing him when he told me, smiling steel, "One day we'll have our republic here."

Bespalov's words signaled that at least one radical Cossack has renounced the swashbuckling attitude of his ancestors. This seemed like progress to me—but I did wonder about what lay behind his remark. With the Soviets gone, and with Russia increasingly concerned about the threat from Chechnya and other nearby Islamic regions, could it be that the Cossack militias patrolling the tense, foggy towns of southern Russia now see themselves as returning to their larger and more epic historical struggle?

Jeffrey Tayler is an Atlantic *correspondent and the author of three books, including* Glory in a Camel's Eye. *His fourth book,* Angry Wind: Through Muslim Black Africa by Truck, Bus, Boat, and Camel, *will be published in February.*

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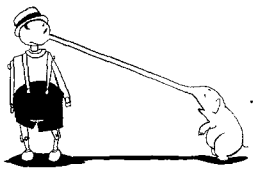


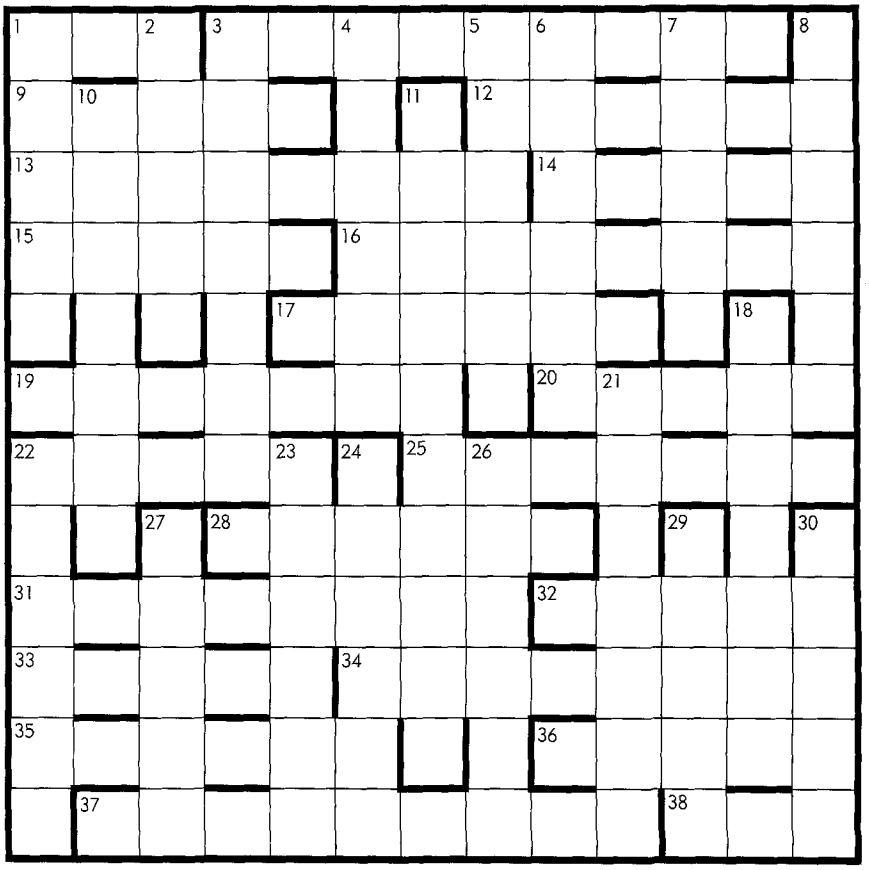
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX *and* HENRY RATHVON

What's What

Eleven clue answers don't fit in the diagram and must be replaced by new words; in six cases the replacement is a multiple-word phrase. Solvers who know what's what will understand the correlation between answers and replacements. Everything else in the puzzle is normal (cryptic, but normal). Clue answers include seven capitalized words.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 206.



ACROSS

1. Sandwich carrier headed the wrong way (3)
3. Mr. Gore getting inside had power shifted (9)
9. European land animals that like water in the ear (5)
12. "Love and Peace" sign held by socially correct neophyte (6)
13. Ulysses, to a foe in North Arabian land (5)
14. Pound verses in good supplies (5)
15. Magazine issue sent back (4)
16. Work in hour of prayer, in consequence of a blackout (2,4)
17. Rejects last two of five digits (6)
19. Kids had disrupted prayer in a synagogue (7)
20. Fire back in the case of shell material (5)
22. Being uneducated, Erin can go wrong (9)
25. No one book reflected passion (7)
28. Pig mound (6)
31. Splitting a bunk, gripe while thrashing (8,2)
32. Overzealous student sent back projection for learning (9)
33. Green outside or white (5)
34. Tee, jar, a match, and change (9)
35. Declare a lock backwards (6)
36. Nothing deposited in less fine-grained soil (5)
37. Transfers bugs in grasses (9)
38. Someone who's lived very few years of time (3)

DOWN

1. Wise guy took some exercise before one (5)
2. All but the first of some garlic relish (4)
3. Reportedly goes back and does a lawn chore (7)
4. Many years after spot for saws (6)
5. Off or on, I'd like some rainy-day activities (6)
6. Shut up after penning French article (7)
7. National Leaguer that is turned down (5)
8. First name Sis misspelled in contest (6)
10. For an audience, an *Amelie* deviation (7)
11. Cat or catfight in the future (8)
18. Cultivated flowers for hot drinks (7)
21. A troop's sad Fate (7)
22. Certain Brazilian humbug with Scotsman's name (6)
23. Sex fiends relaxed your society (6)
24. Back street for 100 small farms (6)
26. Sound on a farm of eggs going into kind of vase (6)
27. Flower sprang up (4)
29. Birdie that hurts with illegitimate serve (5)
30. Experiment with pair of stoats in rendezvous (5)

Note: *The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.*

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WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

JIM PHILPOT, of Cookeville, Tennessee, writes, "In last November's Word Court you wrote, 'None of the major Romance languages—languages directly descended from Latin—have retained ...' Shouldn't *have* have read *has*? Or is the equivalent of *not one* considered a plural form?"

Not one (ahem—please notice I didn't say *none*) of a dozen leading usage manuals and dictionaries that I checked agrees unequivocally with you that *none* has to be singular. The *Associated Press Stylebook* does agree with you, though, that the word should have been singular in my sentence. It says, "Use a plural verb only if the sense is no two or no amount: *None of the consultants agree on the same approach. None of the taxes have been paid.*" But most of my reference books say that *none* may be used with either a plural or a singular verb and that the plural use is more common. A few books suggest that we try to avoid the singular use because it sounds stilted.

Evidently many people believe, as you do, that *none* is equivalent to *not one*. But this isn't quite right. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* succinctly explains why not: "The Old English *nan* 'none' was in fact formed from *ne* 'not' and *an* 'one,' but Old English *nan* was inflected for both singular and plural. Hence it never has existed in the singular only; King Alfred the Great used it as a plural as long ago as A.D. 888." Thus *none* can mean *not any* or *no part* as well as *not one*.

When should *none* be singular, then? Bryan A. Garner presents the contemporary majority opinion in the grammar-and-usage chapter of *The Chicago Manual of Style*: "If it is followed by a singular noun, treat it as a singular {none of the building was painted}; if by a plural noun, treat it as a plural {none of the guests were here when I arrived}." And what if you really do mean *not one*? Both *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage* and Patricia T. O'Conner's *Woe Is I* advise you to say that instead of *none*.

ALEX PREVIDI, of Summit, New Jersey, writes, "My mother yells at my siblings and me for using the phrase *that one* or *this one*. For instance, 'Which pillow was the most comfortable?' '*That one* was.' She insists the answer should just be '*That* was.' I finally told her I wasn't sure *that one* was actually improper grammar. Could you please settle this family feud?"

I'll bet what your mother has in mind is that *that* (or *this*) can be a pronoun, and it can refer to a pillow—so why bother with the word *one*? But *that* and *this* can also be adjectives, modifying nouns or pronouns—as in "Do you want *that* pillow or *this* one?" Here *this one* is perfectly normal phrasing: *one* is standing in for *pillow*, so that *that* and *this* can be parallel, as adjectives. The example you gave is similar: Which one? *That* one.

I don't know who is responsible for the idea that *that* alone is better English than *that one*, but I do know that your mother isn't the only person who has been taught this; I've received other letters on the subject. Language authorities, however, are more likely to make a different point about the pronouns *this* and *that*—namely, that these words shouldn't be used alone unless readers or listeners will easily be able to figure out what they refer to. (This is different from saying they should always be used alone if people will be able to figure them out.) Consider this exchange: "Mom! Can I take the pillow away from her? She's hitting me with it!" "That couldn't hurt." What couldn't hurt: taking the pillow away from her, or being hit with it? Saying "*Doing that* couldn't hurt" or "*That pillow* couldn't hurt" would make the meaning clear.

MAYNARD LASSONDE, of Altamont, New York, writes, "What would you do if you were asked to edit a piece of writing that included the following sentence? 'Your comment *peaked* my interest.' The writer intended the conventional meaning: 'Your comment inspired me to think about your topic.' I suggested to the writer that *peaked* should be replaced with *piqued*. The writer objected, so I did a little research. *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, by Walter W. Skeat, explains that *peak* and *pique* have a common heritage. I'm just an amateur editor, but I don't think this justifies the use of *peaked*. Do you?"

No. The verbs *peak*, "cause to come to a point," and *pique*, "provoke," diverged in meaning centuries ago—if indeed they do have a common heritage, which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is far from certain. Even if they do—the way, for instance, *picket*, as in "picket fence," and *piqué*, "a stiff fabric with a raised pattern," do—that hardly implies that nowadays they're synonyms.

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, *77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.*

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POST MORTEM

Broadway's Last Good Time

Cy Coleman (1929–2004)

BY MARK STEYN

These are glum times on Broadway if you're looking for a musical. Unless it's a revival, chances are you'll find yourself either facing a barrage of portentous, overwrought, overorchestrated bombast that sounds like it made the lower end of the shortlist for Track 19 on Celine Dion's new CD, or stuck in a semi-operatic twilight zone in which some tasteful Sondheim clone twiddles about with a lot of pseudo-recitative for a couple of hours without ever breaking into song.

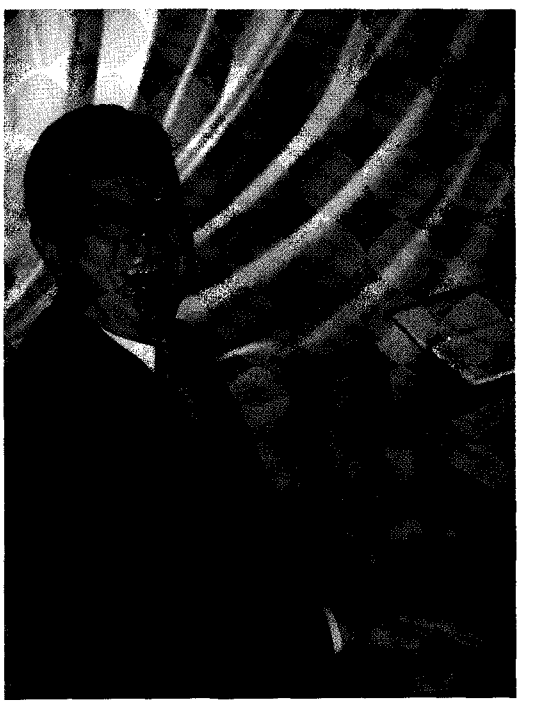
In this barren soil Cy Coleman was Broadway's last good time, a musical-comedy man in an age when the American musical was no laughing matter. He liked funny scripts by Neil Simon and Larry Gelbart, with lotsa laffs. Example: In Coleman's *Little Me* (1962) the luxuriously endowed heroine is called Belle Poitrine. After she saves a Mitteleuropean duchy from bankruptcy, the grateful Prince Cherny raises her to the peerage as the Countess Zaftig.

Coleman could match the funny lines with funny songs, but he also knew when not to: when the job of the composer was to provide a respite from the nonstop gag fest and offer something rueful or charming or romantic. He liked showstoppers, too—numbers you could whack to the back of the second balcony, like "Hey, Look Me Over!" for Lucille Ball, and "If My Friends Could See Me Now" for Gwen Verdon, and "It's Not Where You Start (It's Where You Finish)" for Tommy Tune—songs that came with built-in exclamation points:

> It's not where you start
> It's where you finish
> And you're gonna finish
> On top!

Hard to make that work in *Les Misérables*. But Coleman knew what he liked: *Barnum* was about Barnum, *The Will Rogers Follies* was about Will Rogers, *City of Angels* was about Los Angeles, and *The Life* was about showbiz at the horizontal level—Forty-second Street hookers in the seventies. *Sweet Charity* was adapted from Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*, but it wasn't very Cabirian by the time Coleman, Simon, Verdon, and Bob Fosse were through with it.

Coleman started near enough the top: Nat "King" Cole picked up an early song, "I'm Gonna Laugh You Right Out of My Life," and put him in the big leagues. Sinatra did "Witchcraft" and Peggy Lee "Hey, Big Spender!" And even though they retired and died and there was no one left to get the song to, and even if there were, no radio station would play it, Coleman always gave you the impression that he still had an eye on the "take-home tune," the breakout number, the show tune everybody knows even if they've never seen the show. In the months before *The Will Rogers Follies* opened, in 1991, he was working the big ballad, "Never Met a Man I Didn't Like," at benefit performances all over town. I ran into him a couple of days after he'd sung it at the Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital. "You should have seen him," said his lyricist, Adolph Green. "There wasn't a dry eye, ear, and throat in the house."



"Musical comedy's difficult," Coleman told me once. "When I was doing movies, I used to say, 'Why don't I ever get a good melodrama?' Comedies are very hard; you never get the credit you should. But in a good melodrama you hold one note, change four chords, and you're up for an Academy Award." In their productive periods most distinctively American art forms—musicals, westerns, jazz—were blissfully unaware they were art forms at all. Then they wised up, and mostly with catastrophic consequences. In the 1980s, when the British, through composed pop opera, took up seemingly permanent residence on Broadway, Coleman regarded it as "a *Reader's Digest* version of opera. It seems to give people the feeling of culture."

You mean it gives them the feeling as opposed to the culture?

He snorted his distinctive, sneezy-wheezy, laughing-gas laugh. "*A-hur-hur-hur.* That's what I said."

I mentioned this to Cameron Mackintosh, the producer of *Cats, Les Misérables, Phantom of the Opera*, etc. "What does Cy Coleman know about culture?" he scoffed.

In fact, he knew quite a lot.

The classical stuff came first. A tenant in his parents' Bronx apartment house moved out and left the piano behind. At seven he played Carnegie Hall. His favorite composer in those days was Beethoven. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice. How do you get away from it? Improvise. The child prodigy heard the call of jazz, and his wandering fingers told him the whole classical thing was just hemming him in too much. So he skipped Juilliard, and at fifteen began playing nightclubs. While still a teenager he wrote a fiendishly complex sonata but, between his hectic club life and social life, misplaced it.

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"Surely you can play it from memory?" I suggested a few years back.

"Sit down and order dinner," he said, and turned to the keyboard. If you asked him, he'd still tinkle a little Chopin or Beethoven, but after a few bars he'd segue into a party piece about the cocktail pianist trying to play "Clair de Lune" or some such.

So the teenager got a trio and was sufficiently impressed by his dressing room at the Sherry-Netherland that he moved in. The problem with being musically sophisticated at an early age is that you're not always lyrically sophisticated. He wrote a Latin number, and a pal put words to it.

Oh, Castanetta
Oh, lovely lovely Castanetta
I can't forget the night I met 'er
She cast a net round my heart
Her heels were kicking
Her castanets were gaily clicking
With every click my heart was
ticking
She had me right from the start.

Joe McCarthy, a more professional hand, rewrote it as

The Riviera
On every street a gay casino
Where continentals sip their vino ...

Mabel Mercer and a few other upscale chanteuses began singing it. It would be hard not to improve on "Castanetta," and "The Riviera" certainly has its moments—"where matrons draped in Paris fashions / Prolong the twilight of their passions"—but its "sophistication" always seemed to me only marginally less unconvincing than that of the original. It was the mid-fifties, and Coleman was starting out as a writer of pop standards just as the entire field was about to get ploughed over by rock-and-roll. His ballads in that period were lovely. "Why Try to Change Me Now?" was Sinatra's final record for Columbia, a flip of the finger to the executive honcho Mitch Miller, who'd been trying to change Frank into Guy Mitchell or Patti Page and saddle him with every witless novelty song of the day. "Why Try to Change Me Now?," a plangent, conversational ballad, was Sinatra's way of saying no, thanks, I'll stick with the music, and in the end the music will win.

To be honest, I wasn't sure. It seemed to me that the songs Coleman wrote for Sinatra and others had come along too late to secure a hold in the repertoire. But I was wrong. These days they're everywhere. I was in a hotel room the other week and caught some dreadful Sean Young nonstop-shagging female self-empowerment movie on Channel 139, and just as I was about to flip channels, Nancy Wilson came on the soundtrack singing "The Best Is Yet to Come." Every time I watched CNN before the election, I got distracted by that hotel-chain commercial that uses Coleman's "The Rules of the Road." I went to see Dorothée Berryman, who played the much put-upon wife in last year's Oscar-winning *Les Invasions Barbares*, in cabaret in Montreal, and she opened with a wonderfully tender "I Walk a Little Faster," a Coleman ballad about the anticipation of love.

All three of those songs were written with Coleman's best partner, Carolyn Leigh. Miss Leigh liked to rhyme, and when she'd tired of masculine rhymes (moon/June) and feminine rhymes (fatter/matter), she liked to put the stress on the third or even fourth syllable before the end of the line; "rules of the road," for example, rhymes with "fools of the road." Noel Coward was partial to this, forever rhyming on the ante-penult.

Why must the show go on?
Why not announce the closing
night of it?
The public seem to hate the
sight of it ...

In Coward's hands it seems obtrusive and often points up the dreariness of the tune. But with Leigh it sits so perfectly on top of Coleman's sensuous, sinuous, jazzy melodies, you hardly notice it. Take the middle section of "Witchcraft":

When you arouse the *need* in me
My heart says yes in*deed* in me
Pro*ceed* with what you're *lead*in' me to.

It doesn't look like much in print, but set to those notes, the rhymes slyly intensify the headiness of the music. The Coleman/Leigh songs from the fifties and sixties will endure as long as Gershwin or Porter.

The first time I interviewed him, I was a young slip of a lad, and I wanted to know why his best lyricists were the ladies—Leigh, Dorothy Fields, Betty Comden, Peggy Lee. I put it rather awkwardly and it came out as "Do you write with women because there are certain qualities in what they do that you find attractive?" He howled with laughter and said, "No, I date women because there are certain qualities in what they do that I find attractive." He was for five decades a debonair man about town, a swinger musically and socially, the house pianist on the Playboy TV show and not a guy who had to make do with Hef's leavings from the grotto. But in 1997, to the amazement of Broadway, he got married, to Shelby Brown. Aged seventy, he produced a daughter, Lily Cye, put her down for piano lessons, and installed her baby grand next to his trusty full-size one.

He died a few hours after being taken ill at a first-night party for Michael Frayn's new play, *Democracy*. One of the minor losses occasioned by his passing is that he's no longer around to sing at other people's funerals. He did "Here's to Us" at Judy Garland's, and at Irving Berlin's he sang a gorgeous, slowed-down version of "There's No Business Like Show Business." That's what he did at his best: he could take the most tired, trite, worn, familiar showbiz sentiment and somehow find the truth in it. Sinatra sang all the great songs, but it was Coleman's he put on his tombstone: "The Best Is Yet to Come."

"Wouldn't it be nice," said Cy, "if it's true?" A

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, *and other publications.*

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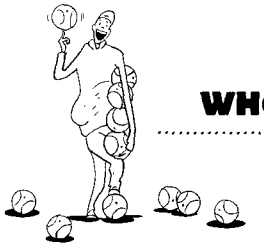

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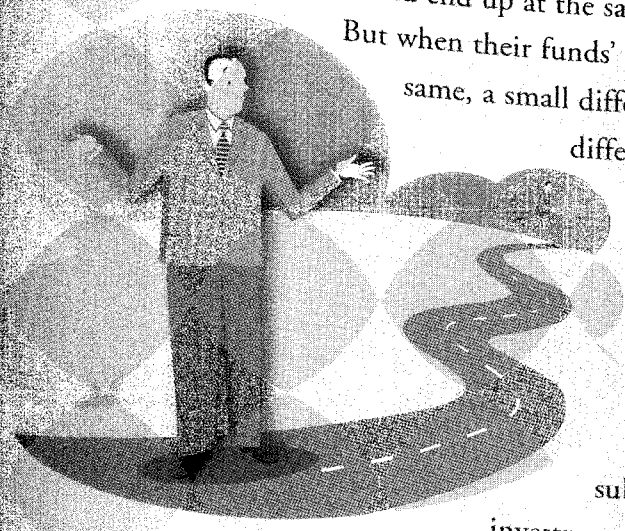
It's funny how the little things can take you further. You'd think, for instance, that two investors who invest the same amount, for the same time, and earn the same return, would end up at the same place.



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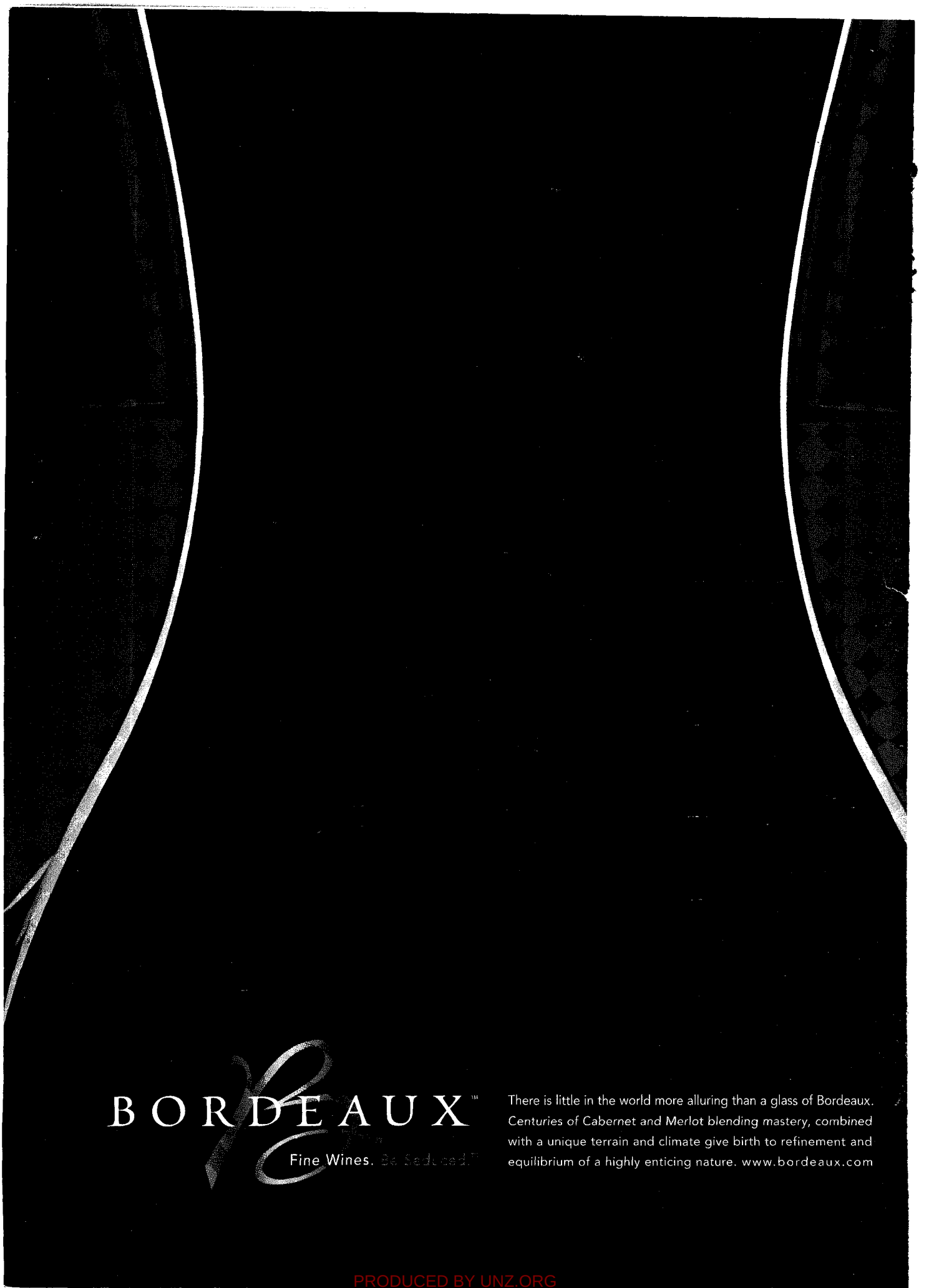

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